

The SMART SET

Edited by
Georgia Jean Nathan
and
H.L. Mencken.



MAY, 1921

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HALF A HUNDRED BURLESQUES, EPIGRAMS, POEMS, SHORT SATIRES, ETC.

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The
SMART SET
The
Aristocrat
Among
Magazines



Sea-Kin

By Mary Carolyn Davies

ONLY the wild things of the sea,
Only the brown things of the wood,
Can see and know this thing in me
That you have never understood.

The fire of your hearth is warm and good.
But only the swift things of the sea,
Only the shy things of the wood,
Not you, not you, are kin to me.

But I shall love you, as I should,
And dwell in your house, and my soul shall be
Dead, like a trapped thing of the wood,
Dumb, like a caught thing of the sea.

And I shall smile, not to let you know.
Every woman who lives, smiles so.





Four Piece Free Poetry by Chinese Young Man

By S. P. K. Ming

I

PROPER MAN

PROPER man
Live in the same house
A long, long time.

I live in my house
Fourteen years.

II

YOUNG LADY

Evening, very good looking;
Morning, like devil.

III

BABIES

More small,
More naughty.

IV

ALL THE SAME

Married;
Dead.

The Princess Ia's Love-Song

[A Complete Novelette]

By Stephen Ta Van

CHAPTER I

"FUTILE egotist! Weakling and failure! Pitiful, penny-ante Don Juan! To think that I should have been fool enough—a woman like me!—to sacrifice myself for such a thing as you! Before God, I am ashamed!"

For the thousand-and-first time in his life of a decade with the gaunt ex-actress Ernestine, whose stage name had been La Marche, the poet Paul Wrightstone—author of those ephemeral successes, "Voodoo Echoes" and "The Haitian Imperial Salute"—found himself the target of a temperamental harangue.

He sat lacing his shoes in the East Thirty-third Street apartment at three o'clock in the afternoon of a May Wednesday, with an aloof deliberation that was maddening, as he well knew, to the angry woman. Without effort, he made each slow, apparently indifferent movement a specific insult. So often had scenes of jealousy been staged, that he and Ernestine played then automatically, yet with the unfailing natural venom of an artistic couple whose attachment, outlasting many trials, had grown at the same time stronger and more burdensome with the passage of the years.

Like a fugue the deep voice, in the early Nance O'Neill manner, resumed its plain

"If only you could hold a job, any kind of a job. But no! you are always dreaming of millions, when we haven't

so much as a salad in the house. You thought the trick jobs of wartime would last forever, and spent your time riding in motors with women. But the war-drives are over now, and there will never be any more, and on top of that, you have lost the only place you could get, a boy's job on *O'Toole's*. No wonder they wouldn't keep you—you can't even get to an office on time. Nobody wants you, and you write nothing. And you are growing old, Paul. Soon—God! to think of the humiliation to your egregious vanity!—your women will be leaving you for younger men."

Even under the ultimate insults concerning his art and age, not a muscle of the poet's carefully educated mask betrayed emotion. He finished his task, studied his footgear attentively, rose by sections, and walked into the tiny dressing-room without a glance at the oratress.

Furious, she followed him, wrecking the curtain with a dramatic sweep of long arm and bony hand.

"Do you dare to ignore me? *Me?* Answer, I say!"

"What out of hell shall I answer, sweet chuck?" he inquired in a thin, languid voice. "You propound no intelligible question, yet clamor for reply. It isn't done."

Indifferent to her gasp of hate, he brushed back, before the ornate, tarnished mirror bought at an auction, his sparse fair hair, fascinatingly grey over the ears, and receding not unbecomingly from the forehead. Like most

men and all artists, he found pleasure in his mirrored image, and had a more logical reason than many. It was true that he was aging. Disappointment had taken its toll, etching the lines of his forty years with cruel sharpness. But his figure, meticulously exercised since athletic days, was still lithe, and he noted with satisfaction that he retained the poise of youth. At a little distance his small head and broad, sloping shoulders almost passed for a boy's.

He powdered carefully his long predatory nose, turning his face from side to side before the mirror, while behind him the storm burst forth anew.

The middle-aged voice, raucous with accumulation of sex-bitterness, filled the little apartment. How dreary were the repeated grudges, dead causes of strife of half a dozen years gone by! From the morbid depths of female memory Ernestine produced them, he thought, as a whirlpool brings up stark cadavers of men long drowned.

Grotesque rather than moving, they failed even to intrigue him. Most stale, flat and unprofitable, he considered, were the mouthings of this grey-haired giantess with whom for so long he had talked, eaten and breathed, rejoiced and suffered superficially—shared all, in fact, except his intimate thoughts.

One could not truly share thoughts with a woman, and thus she with whom one lived remained essentially a stranger, and ultimately one was compelled to acknowledge it. That was the truth of the matter: two organisms fundamentally opposed to each other by nature could never in the true sense be intimate. Passion itself was an illusion, enduring love an ironical dream.

With a sidelong glance of his prominent grey eyes, as he tilted his chin to fasten his collar, he appraised the harridan unemotionally. By what strange quirk of fate had she become his permanent companion? His friends had told him, he himself had known, that her nature was a terrible one. There

had been no definite courtship, none of the wild campaigning which fascinated him in his metropolitan quests. They had drifted together by degrees; had loved, quarrelled; loved again, quarrelled and been reconciled. That was all, there was no logical plan or reason, as in a story or a piece of music.

The Ernestine of early days had been volcano-tempered, but of a striking personality, arresting outwardly in the A. B. Wenzell manner. Belasco liked her work, and for a time it seemed that she would have a vogue in flamboyant claptrap, despite the great physical height which controlled her range of parts. She played several rôles well, and one—Sophronia Wye, the widow, in "Now or Never"—magnificently. Then she had failed, not conspicuously, but gradually and for no special reason, without the dignity of a fall.

At last there were no parts for her. She allowed the grey to climb up from the roots of her hair, and spoke with unfettered cynicism of younger actresses.

Her jealousy, always smoldering, had spurted up in flames. At first he had humored her, then mocked, and finally adopted a system of lies for comfort's sake, after the habit of hagridden husbands.

She hated bitterly, not only the women by whom he was attracted, but his friends, and especially the old guard of Bohemians with whom friendship was of long standing. Of the metropolitan survivors of college days at Ware, for example, but one had remained tolerable to her: Alloway, the drunken lawyer, and he only by reason of a solemn owlish tact. The architect M'Grass, she said, was treacherous; Nowton, the painter, disreputable; and the illustrator Meigs too negligible to be endured. As to little Bill Rhett, the unpopular novelist, she foamed with rage if his name was mentioned, for he had the misfortune to be closer to Paul in temperament than any of the others, and to influence him most.

Of course there was in her mania an element flattering and therefore by no means disagreeable to the feline poet. To be adored jealously was manna to him in a wilderness often unappreciative. To be nagged, however, was a different matter. He had come to hate the recurrent vaudeville, and then to despise it with a cold and permanent distaste.

His thought as the thousand-and-first harangue checked, staggered and fell was of escape. For some days, following barren weeks, his brain had been busy with the preliminary struggle to create a novelette. Although the work was nauseatingly commercial—a sop to landlord and produce-dealer—it was unhappily close enough to true artistic endeavor to demand the feverish concentration which, when it invades the mind, usurps it. Disgusted by the necessity for burlesque, yet unable to be free, he pursued inspiration as a squirrel treads a wheel, but without the little beast's enthusiasm. The legs and arms of his brain were busy with the motion, and his attitude toward domestic problems was indicated by a flirt of the brush. Any attention to Ernestine, however complicated within itself by history and temperament, was strictly a caudal matter, so to speak, as long as the wheel revolved.

Of far more interest than Ernestine, and involved in the literary obsession, was the desire of the spirit in his feet to lead him toward the presence of his newest imamorata, the beautiful waitress Lovely-Eyes, whom he was to meet before evening.

Without her own comprehension, Lovely-Eyes had inherited from a long line of predecessors the romantic impulse upon which his life depended for refreshment, and without which he would not have been able to compose a vital line, or endure the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

Wriggling his shoulders into an aged but rakish light-grey home spun coat, and collecting hat, gloves and a massive stick, he was about to attempt

his exit during the lull, when a sharp command to halt arrested him.

He turned, as Ernestine drew from her bosom and extended theatrically the familiar, sulphur-colored envelope.

"This came for you last night, when you were out with your women." She enunciated the word "women" with an indescribably vindictive grating of her large teeth. "I thought it might be important, so I opened it, but it was only another assignation."

He took the telegram and glanced at it, and abruptly his whole mood shifted like a kaleidoscope; for to his temperament there could be nothing more irritating than the message from the woman who had just been discarded. Treadmill, poise and appointment were forgotten forthwith, and recognizing with artistic detachment his approach to an explosion, he prepared to outdo himself.

But again he was halted—by an occurrence as mockingly fatal to an emotional spasm as the other check had been logically provocative.

The doorbell sounded, sharply, with three short and two long rings.

Ernestine, drawn up in stage pose to repel assault, stood rigid.

"Rhett's ring!" she hissed. "Paul, I swear to Heaven that if you let that little dog come up here, I will shoot him!"

Cynical amusement shifted the kaleidoscope again, and nonchalance returned to the poet's relief as suddenly as it had departed.

"Undoubtedly that is little Bill," he said, plucking an imaginary thread from his sleeve. "Undoubtedly. It's his ring. But don't worry, he won't come up here. He doesn't want to see you. I know what he wants. The only question is the amount. I go, my soul, I go to disappoint him."

He swung open the door.

"Paul!"

"Well, what is it?" he demanded grudgingly.

She hesitated, coyly for one so tall and old.

"Nothing. Go to your women."

With a feeling of embarrassment he realized that she wished to kiss him, but would not allow herself to make the advance. Loathing his own cowardice, he slammed the door behind him.

It was wrenched open while he was clattering down the stairs, and once more the tragic voice boomed his name.

"Angels and ministers of grace," he half whispered, "what is it now?"

"Paul, you've forgotten your aspirin," she called urgently, with all the solemnity in the world.

He threw up his hands like a man falling down a cliff, but lowered them at sight of the diminutive form of Bill Rhett, draped upon the newel post in the lower hall.

CHAPTER II

RHETT, determined writer of fiction unsuited to the popular taste, looked up at him steadily with dark, pin-point eyes under heavy waxen lids, in an Oriental face immobile save for a nervous twitch, scarcely perceptible, at the left corner of the mouth. He suggested a man who had died dull and exhausted, and having been resurrected miraculously in a clever reincarnation, was both amused and bored by it.

"If you had any common sense, you'd take your aspirin matter-of-factly," he said in a flat tone. "All she wants is a home. She is tired of boheeming."

"A home!" exclaimed the poet wildly, passing him.

Striding through the dingy vestibule, he scooped from the little metal mailbox a letter, from which, without pausing in his stride, he extracted a slip of governmental blue.

"From my noble sister," he said, waving it at the following novelist, with a moderately successful effort to appear casual under good fortune.

He stopped on the sidewalk and inhaled the afternoon air, sodden with the City's evil smells, but nevertheless hinting of amber Spring. The escape, the season, and the money order in his hand made play with his harried soul, irritating where ordinarily they would

have cheered. He was alive, however, to an odd sense of the obligation of friendship.

"How much do you absolutely need?" he asked, again waving the blue slip.

"I am in funds," replied Rhett surprisingly. "Having sold a story unexpectedly, I come expressly to pay Cæsar, not to borrow from him."

He produced a thin sheaf of bills, and a transfer was made.

They walked over and around sprawling children toward Fifth avenue. Temporarily jobless—Rhett was at intervals an editor—they might have been gentlemen of leisure, and normally in such a situation their chameleon-like personalities would have transformed themselves into those of plutocrats, or, more pictorially, of historical dandies.

They would have stepped forth lightly in the balmy air, clad by virtue of imagination in the frills, strapped trousers and bell-crowned hats of Brummel and Nash. Each, without communication with his fellow, would have visualized a story wherein he figured as the hero of a more withering retort to Prinny than that of the original Beau.

Had the epoch been wet, they would have crooked elbows with calm appreciation at Almack's, in the nearest corner saloon.

But actually their moods were jangled, Wrightstone's by the recent flurry of disasters, the novelist's directly by a legal communication on behalf of his current wife, perversely by the acceptance of a manuscript which, according to all the laws and logic of Philistia, should have been refused.

As to liquor in prohibitory days, they could get it easily enough, but not with the nonchalant openness which would have accorded with a George IV mood. The groggery, with its transparent mystery and hugger-mugger, would not have seemed to be Almack's.

Half a block from Fifth Avenue, the poet stopped in his tracks to stare frankly at a passing stranger—a common trick of his.

"Small, primly dressed, gold eyeglass

chain, buck teeth," he tabulated, as he caught up. "He reminds me of some animal—I don't know which—some East Indian rodent, on account of the teeth, I think. Bill, did it ever occur to you that every human being is conspicuously like some animal? For examples, there are the guinea-pig, sty-pig, alley-cat, kangaroo, skunk and badger. You see them every day. Now Ernestine—"

"You are going to say something unpleasant," the novelist broke in sourly. "Don't. You can't change her. She is Fate holding the shears, Mount McKinley at sunset. Impatience on a monument. What has she been doing now?"

Wrightstone held out the crumpled telegram transferred by Ernestine.

"Making a text of this."

"Ah, your latest amourette, I suppose. Or is it the latest but one?"

"Don't be so damned cynical. This one was more serious than anything you know about, and lasted a full year. I'm breaking it off."

"So I gather from the author's style. She 'implores' you to meet her. How much does Ernestine know?"

"As much as they ever do, no more, no less. What isn't so, they think is so, and vice versa. I never knew it to fail. If only one could be found who would understand!"

By force of habit, they had turned south on the Avenue, against the stream of barbaric faces, sleepless-eyed from greed, flabbily full-fed, or drearily moronic.

"From your tone—it would seem—that you have found an understanding one," Rhett jerked, dodging a massive dowager in full career.

"What?"

"I said, you sound as if you had a new toy."

"An inspiration, if I only could use it," said Wrightstone, with the smile of one holding a secret.

A sneer made little Rhett's face ugly. He had a permanent contempt, not only for his friend's taste in women, but for his management of affairs with them. He himself loved fewer and loved them more, and candidly thought Wright-

stone a fool for scattering his attention.

The poet, on his side, believed that his was the last word in expertness in the matter of women. Rhett, he asserted, had been chosen by too few females of class to have the right to form general opinions concerning the sex, whereas he himself, with his long and wide experience, etc., etc.

When Wrightstone held forth in that strain, little Rhett's eyes became mere dots, and seemed to have been drawn into his head by unutterable weariness. He remained in a condition of somnolence until the appearance of an opportunity to speak of some phase of the fine arts. Then, suddenly awaking, he took revenge by demanding, with words like hornets, acquiescence in his opinions, which, since he had worked them out independently, were offensive to many and especially to his friend the poet.

The two bored their way through the milling crowds in front of the windows where dresses were displayed, and lingered in the open spaces before the bookshops. At Revell's, they entered to purchase an Esperanto grammar, because a chance word had excited Wrightstone about the language. Within, he forgot the Esperanto, but coveted other volumes, and would have purloined them if he could have followed his natural bent. He loved rich leather bindings, and the appearance and sound of words beautifully joined, and often read by the half-day. The novelist, whose curious mind was a storehouse of odd knowledge from the story of Rysdyck's stallion to De Heredia's sonnets, scarcely read three books a year, and was accustomed to say that he and the American Business Man had arrived by different routes at the same attitude with regard to standard literature.

Their drift carried them past the denaturalized Brevoort to Washington Square. They were graduates of the Square, familiar with its geography and panorama, calloused, in the old days, by its every bench. Coming up from college in New England with naïve, old-style academic educations, they had

breathed its atmosphere and lived and labored in its purlieus before overemphasis was laid upon it as Boheemya.

Its vermin had feasted upon their flesh by night, its warmth had comforted them as they sunned themselves, sockless, on the benches after a hard winter. Veterans of its peculiar warfare, they had avoided degradations other than poverty, rejecting the filth that caught so many, and though they were failures commercially, experience had found metal in them. Poor and obscure they occasionally had the courage not to betray their convictions and in their way deserved the gratitude of their successors by keeping the Torch alight.

Thoughts of this kind, and of the strangeness of their destiny, flickered like leaf-shadows across their sardonic, incurably romantic minds as they seated themselves on a dark green bench, near which a noisy group of urchins matched pennies, quite in the manner of the urchins of twenty years before. The Square had not altered greatly, the penny-matching was the same, only they themselves, Wrightstone and Rhett, had grown older and balder and more tired, while many of their friends and contemporaries were rotten underground, and some were in the high places of finance, and some—Heigho, a mad world, my masters!

"Now, this new inspiration of yours," said Rhett brusquely. "No doubt her quality is far, far beyond the usual, yes? Unique, in fact—not to be matched, and all that?"

The poet hesitated a moment.

"She has a remarkable character," he then replied.

"Doubtless, doubtless. I used to know a china-collector, who, when he had an especially snappy teapot, would say: 'This, now, is a very meritorious article.' You sound markedly like him. Is she—ah—high-born? Of the nobility of the country, as it were?"

"She works for her living."

"A talented needlewoman or intelligent stemwinder! That's rather raw, considering how hard you've slammed

me for excursions into the life of that stratum."

The temptation lay heavy on the poet to impart the identity of the girl, whom Rhett knew well, had in fact discovered. He was restrained by natural delight in his friend's lack of perception. Moreover, his vanity shrank instinctively from the chance of betraying the truth that Lovely-Eyes, a child of Olean transplanted to Manhattan, represented to him the soft spell of the Malay nights his senses craved—that his imagination, aided by a real or fancied suggestion in her carriage, had made her for him the reincarnation of a savage princess.

"To say sooth," he countered, shifting with the ease of his nature into a more prosaic slant, and igniting a Dromedary cigarette, "I'm horribly fed up with the Duchess of Whatshire. The woman I spoke of—the sender of the telegram—belongs to that ilk. Very terrible. Seldom discards her social stays, and used to scold me for having shabby gloves and not enough money, on occasion, to entertain her properly. I was really very patient, but you can't stand that sort of thing permanently."

He shuddered reminiscently, and Rhett, whose memories included reminiscences of the same kind, shuddered with him.

"You know I had a ghastly experience with acrid gentility in my New Hampshire youth," Wrightstone went on. "I shall never forget how the family dined on pride and ill-temper until my sister married, and then began to eat heartily. I think it was the discovery of the good parents' hypocrisy that gave me the impetus to face an indifferent world. How they fawned on Horace Ude and his rum-and-molasses millions! Not," he added feelingly, "that I wouldn't like to annex a couple of the millions, if I could murder my brother-in-law and filch them without detection."

"Well, you draw a tithe."

"Seventy-five dollars a quarter, when my sister doesn't forget. She pensions literature in my person, at the rate of twenty-five dollars a month. It's by way of a bounty for not bothering her."

He spoke with an utter absence of feeling, resentful or otherwise, which would have puzzled the sister in question, but was entirely comprehensible to the fellow New Englander beside him, who had revolted even more bitterly against the dim, cold limbo of Pilgrim tradition, and escaped naked and with ribs scraped by the bars. To neither man remained more than an instinctive trickle of blood-feeling, and in the freedom from obligation had centred their strength and tragedy.

"What is it, in fact, that you resent most in women, Paul?" asked the novelist, after he had kindled an abnormally long cigar to combat the stench of the Dromedary.

"Their desire to own me," exclaimed the poet. "My life is a living hell because of it."

"You still have much to learn," Rhett murmured, but the other swung on, unheeding.

"It seems to have been my inescapable fate to become seriously involved with those women, those unsatisfied women. No philosophy calms them, no sense of humour relieves the strain. Apparently they have been cursed by the gods with a dry passion. If you kiss them they think you are deceiving them, and if you don't, they know you are. The first woman I ever loved was like that—a fox was forever gnawing at her vitals. She finally killed it, and herself at the same time, with religion. Maude—my legal wife—was the same, but it drained her, and when I last saw her she was desiccated, withered, a mere mummy of a soul. Then there was this woman, with whom I have taken infinite pains, to my disappointment. And then—worst of all and all the time—the perennial brook turned into a raging river—Ernestine! Is there no comfort to be found in any of them? What is it that they lack?"

"Maybe the thing they lack most is the thing they fail to find in you. There's nothing the matter with Ernestine at all, except that she wants a home. She's no boheemian—she's just a kind, motherly old sheep dressed up in wolf's

clothing, and you haven't sense enough to see it."

"God bless an upright judge! Since when did *you* learn so much about marital sweetness and light." The poet twisted on the bench, writhing with excess of spleen. "Bill, I have a mind to pass it up. What do you say? Would the old girl be worse off without me than with me?"

"No, but you'd be worse off without her. You're really very dependent on her. You don't realize it, but you are. You pay the monogamist's penalty of dependence for the mended socks, the heated oatmeal, the woolen muffler wrapped around your throat as you go out to face the storm. Gradually, insensibly, the female weaves a mesh of comforts about her male, and when he wishes to escape, he finds himself held down by the threads by which the Lilliputians bound Gulliver. The artist is more likely to be helpless than another, because of his eternal naïveté. He turns his face to the generous shoulder with less self-consciousness than does the lordly merchant."

Pity for himself as an artist moved the poet to reverie, and through the noxious Dromedary smoke he saw the sleek charm of Lovely-Eyes, contrasted with his life-partner's gaunt attenuation.

"I grow old," he mused. "I grow old, and she twitted me with it today, *la vieille* Ernestine. It is true. None of us may escape it. Soon—before I know it—the desire for life, the personal joy in the year's rebirth, will be gone out of my carcass. I shall look calmly at clouds moving across the sky and trees shaken by the wind, and sometime I shall find myself thinking of death as old persons do. The young think they think of death, but they only think of it as something abstract, or happening to others, never as anything sib with themselves. One does not look Master Death in the face until after forty. I am forty-two, and I hate to stop living. Am I to have Youth beside me no more?"

"Of course you'll have Youth beside

you," replied Rhett cheerfully. "But that's no good reason for throwing age out of the window. Take 'em both—you have a thick hide. And don't be a fool, Paul. Play your game as Nature tells you. You're a natural experimenter, not an extremist. Go on and experiment, but don't fool yourself into thinking you're a pioneer. You couldn't stand the gaff."

Wrightstone snapped the remnant of his Dromedary at an urchin's head, and stood up.

"There are times," he said, "when I loathe you as I had never supposed myself capable of hating anyone."

"I tell you the truth and you don't like it," the unperturbed novelist rejoined. "As a matter of fact, I'm surprised at my own moderation. I could tell you much bitterer things, if I liked. My entire absence of affection for you makes me clairvoyant."

Nevertheless there was anxiety in the look with which he followed his friend's departing figure.

"Lay off the intelligent working-gel stuff," he called. "You're in too shifty a mood for it."

The poet made no response beyond an angry wave of a large white hand.

Rhett sat motionless as a Chinese Buddha. His eyes, dull and apparently indifferent, caught without a flicker the motion of a boy's foot as it covered an unwatched coin. His brain, in the meantime, was briskly backtracking for an impression which it had missed. It found what it sought.

"Lovely-Eyes!" it registered. "He is enamoured of the little tray-toter with the undulating walk."

A queer smile, half sweet, half malicious, drew down the twitching mouth. In calm moments of consideration, the little man seldom saw his friend otherwise than as a child.

CHAPTER III

THE poet moved in a northerly direction without hurry. His appointment with the waitress was not until five-thirty, and the restaurant where she

worked was on Eighth Avenue in the Twenties. He had a half-hour's surplus.

His irritation with Rhett and circumstances grew as he wandered past Gonfarone's and the basement shops, at which he cast a graduate's cold eye. The comment of the novelist was an addition of insult to injury, after the day's nagging and the fruitless struggle with the novelette. With what justice did Rhett—himself an arrant failure—presume to speak as a dictator? The little man, chock full of vanity, had become the pest that Ernestine considered him.

Ernestine! Another revulsion shook him at the thought of her. What grotesquerie, what age! At Twelfth Street and Sixth Avenue he paused to wonder if persons of phlegmatic temperament became as weary of their life-partners as the Children of Art. It was not possible that they did; since otherwise, how could so many life-partnerships endure? Surely some men and women were so unutterably dreadful that if one ever become tired of them at all, one could not continue to live with them for another moment.

And in fact many more persons, he remembered, did actually desert their respective companions than was commonly supposed. Each year in every long street, some harried husband or hounded wife slipped out of the neighborhood and was hidden in the general *melée*. The newspapers recorded the names of those who were caught, but think of the thousands who made their escapes! Lost, they were happier; and those they left behind were happier, and usually as well off economically—God seemed to provide. Doubtless some of the deserters, drawing new vigor from freedom, went far and had romantic careers in Borneo or the wilds of Peru.

To be free! He had sometimes turned to the wall but never destroyed the mental picture of himself as King of the Islands, and in his character as such had written the barbaric chants, literarily heavy with the call of the tom-tom to forbidden feasts, and the

dank reek of the forest from which one leaped out into the glare of mile upon mile of untrodden beach. The words ran beyond the songs into stories or dreams, hazy or elaborately worked out, of scenes and adventures appropriate to a chieftain addressed as D'wan (lord), and holding the power of life and death, subject to assassination, over a golden skinned tribe. These adventures centred about the chieftain's struggle to retain possession of the beautiful Ia, hereditary princess of the Archipelago, against the machinations of her cousin Talait, who had sworn to cut off her hands.

In the chants, carrying the syncopated rhythm of savage emotion, and in the dreams and stories, he had been more nearly himself, he believed, than at any other time. Through that medium, indirect and crippled though it was, the farce of destiny had allowed him at least an echo of true expression.

It was pure folly for Rhett to assert that he was dependant and home-loving; nothing could be further from the truth. His real self was the adventurer, hardy, quietly reckless, keen and alert upon the search to discover.

In this mood he approached the restaurant graced by the waitress called Lovely-Eyes—a name which she owed to Rhett, her Columbus.

The place was a long, narrow alley between mirrors framed in thickly varnished woodwork, which supplied a false effect of brilliance. One looked in from the sidewalk through a wide window displaying a rich but congealed repast, flanked, as a corpse by candles, by various bottled temperance drinks. Gilt lettering on the pane published the name: *Chemin des Dames and Verdun Restaurant and Bakery*, and in the foreground were to be seen counter and coffee-urns, manned by a member of the latest team of Grecian proprietors.

Wrightstone, accustomed to the splendor, entered nonchalantly in expectation of Hellenic courtesy, but the swarthy guardian returned no answer to his greeting, and a glance at Lovely-Eyes, hatted and ready for the street, informed him that one of the com-

mercial disagreements not uncommon in the C. des D. and V. was taking place.

The girl's face blazed with anger. It was obvious that she had checked a tirade at sight of him. The vindictive light in her dark eyes would have been repellent in an ugly woman, but beauty carried it off for her, and his thought was:

"What a superb animal!"

Controlling herself, she swept past the Greek with a murderous look, and preceded the poet to the street, where she launched into a long and circumstantial account of the quarrel, which involved a lead coin, an angry patron, hours, stations, wages, four other waitresses, the relatives of all of them, the proprietors and their ancestry, respective and collective.

Wrightstone listened vaguely to the babble, noting the vulgarity without resenting it as he resented Ernestine's, to which it was clearly akin. Not only had the girl the beauty which was to his soul as a pool in the forest to a wanderer, but she had Youth's freshness, upon which his mind had been dwelling with bitter regret. From the murk of her common talk, the ironic gift of youth glowed mystically.

Indeed it was her youth that she was trying, ignorantly and ardently, to express—her revolt against conditions and a destiny which she did not understand, but which she felt to be bringing down upon her the ugliness of suffering and age, without giving her a chance to savor happiness. In her small, hard features were aspiration and obstinacy, immaturity and sophistication.

She was scarcely more than eighteen, and had a slim figure, prematurely rounded, and the smooth, swaying carriage which had first identified her with the island princess of the poet's dream.

Beside her vitality, his false boyishness ebbed suddenly, and his slightly aging figure and sardonic wrinkles, his sharply pressed trousers over thin shanks, and yellow gloves and cane, gave him for the moment in his own eyes the appearance of a dissipated uncle walking with his niece. Squaring

his shoulders defiantly, he glanced side-long at passers-by, to catch their impressions. It was as though, as Heine said of women, he strove to have a mirror always before him.

They crossed to Fifth Avenue and bought flowers.

"You should not have flowers like these," he said, recovering his poise in the damp fragrance of the florist's shop, "but exotic blooms, strange lilies opening to the shape of cups, and lying without motion on the water in a green gloom. These roses and sweet peas are for jangling Western women, not for an eternal verity like you."

Lovely-Eyes, holding the flowers, accepted the speech seriously, as she had accepted the name which Rhett gave her. The two writers were the only men she had ever known whose words aroused her imagination. She was not compelled to wonder what casual males meant by the clumsy mummerly with which they wrapped their thoughts; she knew instinctively, or by experience. But the two writers made her think. Where, for example, did the lilies grow of which Paul spoke? Geography was the hazy remembrance of a colored map to her. Her education had been only sufficient to give her a hint, as she grew older, of masses of information that she had missed.

They were fortunate enough to find a hansom, and were driven slowly past the drifting crowds and vehicles, and grotesque or stately buildings, of the city's characteristic efflorescence.

A hansom in Fifth Avenue, with a young and lovely woman wearing flowers! Rhett, absorbing the beauty beside him and gazing ahead with stony eyes, would have remembered Babylon and Persepolis, and thought of the death of Manhattan—of how, when this particular civilization decayed, the weak, pain-racked savages to whom the race would revert, might crawl timorously among the ruins of the Great City without finding as valid remnants of its lath and tinsel as their ancestors had found of ancient art in Herculaneum. But to Wrightstone, in

his mood, the clamor and speed and forced splendor were electric, quickening the current of his romantic impulse.

They were passing the Plaza, and to the left stretched the Park, its new foliage a gray-green in the soft evening haze. To the right, early lights were beginning to cast a glow above the white tables in the dining-rooms of the tall hotels. The poet removed one yellow glove and took the hand of Lovely-Eyes. The strong, pointed fingers, with white flecks across the nails, clung to his palm without claspings.

"You are like a flower yourself, like one of those lilies of which I spoke," he said. "You make me think of wide spaces where a warm wind blows, the sea, and still nights, and clean work in the open. I would like to take care of you, and work for you—hard, with my hands. Come away with me. I have money enough for a start, and the whole world is before us."

The proposal was no more fantastic than the girl's usual portion. In the fluid society in which she moved, men daily laid down their forks—or held those tools suspended—to ask her to accompany them for a day or for life. She had the cynical philosophy toward desire that beauty teaches, and her life for half a dozen years had been a battle of wits against men.

"I like you very much," she said. "You've taught me more than anyone else, except, maybe, Mr. Rhett, and I could learn a lot more from you. I like to be with you, and I'd like a vacation—I'm sick to death of the rotten restaurants. But my aunt would kill me if I went."

"Your aunt! I didn't know you had an aunt. Is she kind to you?"

"She lives off me," Lovely-Eyes replied with the frankness of her class. "She's a hairdresser, as well able to earn money as I am. If I went away she'd have to go to work, and she'd rather do anything else than that. I'm afraid of her."

Sardonic thoughts trooped through Wrightstone's mind anent the relatives of beautiful women, so saintly in fiction,

so frequently weak or vicious in fact. A score of times he had seen the bony face of greed exposed behind a mask of disinterested love. In the name of chastity's protection, what moral atrocities were committed.

"I don't think we need worry much about your aunt," he said, drawing the half-yielding body closer to him. "You have done enough for her; it is time for you to think of yourself."

"What about your wife?"

His expression changed queerly, betraying his weakness and causing him to look like an old child, as he practiced the habitual half-deception resulting from his manner of life.

"My dear, my wife hasn't seen me for fifteen years, and has no more interest in me than in the shoes of as long ago. She would divorce me if I asked her. I have no wife in New York."

Troubled by the instinctive feeling of shame which continued to oppress him, to his vexation, whenever he took refuge behind the legal irregularity of his relation with Ernestine, he shook himself mentally, and his kaleidoscopic temperament came loyally to his relief.

Holding Lovely-Eyes more closely, he began his version of Othello's Stories, the peacock's tail, in one form or another, of every imaginative lover. Gradually, as he talked, he reached a height of sincerity for his type. Believing himself in love, he claimed the right of the artist to possession. He saw himself, rejuvenated, casting aside the refuse of wasted years and building a new career with the help of the vitality of this child of the people, connected so strangely with the stuff of his dreams, the Kingdom of the Islands. By virtue of that connection, he was no intriguer, but the eternal pirate, following romance to the goal of the world's desire. Remembrance of weakness fell away; the very money in his pocket seemed to have multiplied magically.

His flow of language was excellent. He thought that he had never wooed more effectively, and would have been completely happy, save for a nagging suggestion, half-formed, of other days.

For the first time in his experience he had a sense of repetition, tormenting in the circumstances. A sentence here and there—had he not spoken them to other women? There was in that last phrase a hint of staleness. Could it actually be that he was growing old?

He stumbled a trifle, then went on. . . . The eyes of the girl were her own—no two women had eyes alike; but the curve of her neck was haunted. Who was it that had a line like that, breaking double at the hollow? Estelle, Aline, Lasalle the laughing model, killed in an accident? Ironically, it was Margie—Margie of Willowcrest, with whom he had eloped more than twenty years before, and been brought back by irate guardians. A year later she had espoused an undertaker, and proceeded to punctuate her married life by the production of bi-annual offspring almost immodestly healthy for a woman in her position. . . . And he was making love to a girl young enough to have been one of them!

He cleared his brain and kissed Lovely-Eyes on the lips, and straightway forgot everything except her, for her atmosphere, which he had entered with the kiss, was as fragrant as the Spring.

Opposite the Metropolitan Museum she promised to meet him at the train at a quarter to eleven, and they changed to a taxi for speed, and rode back in the trance appropriate to such an occasion.

CHAPTER IV

HE left her at the corner, a block from her lodging. She would meet him with no more possessions than could be carried in a suitcase, and they would leave for the West and points unknown.

A visualization of Romance at last! No more intrigues and half-concealed "affairs," with well-tried shifts and ends foreshadowed before they were begun, but a sunlit adventure into the Unknown. No more bickerings with the dreary Ernestine, merely a curt note and thereafter a void. How often had they

discussed an abrupt finish, he and she, almost brought it off, in fact! It was a weekly occurrence for Ernestine to fling out in a rage, threatening never to return, and after a sojourn of a few hours to reappear, staging a grotesque thaw after a second-act snowstorm. He himself had departed several times, with the firm and steadfast resolution to remain away. An end to all that. This time, he would crowd Destiny against the wall.

He hoped to avoid the giantess while collecting the few belongings which he desired to take with him. She might wait for him at dinner-time in the apartment, but would probably leave by mid-evening if he did not come. Despite romance, the craving of the inner man was commencing to assert itself. He had not eaten since a scanty lunch. An interim, the Coffee Bar, and a sandwich seemed to be indicated.

He bought a *Post* and descended to the subway automatically, a metropolitan even on the brink of his departure. Staring hostilely at the miscellany in the packed car, he shuddered to think that each member of it was possessed by a desire like his own, the itch for food. In a few hours, happily, he would see no more of them.

The ride was from one express station to the next, and the exit shot him out, into a glare of blue and orange lights and a maelstrom of rushing vehicles, close to the side street which sheltered the Coffee Bar.

He passed a flower stall in which all the flowers seemed to have been embalmed, a crippled beggar walking on his knee-joints, an expensive couple quarreling frankly before a restaurant, and invaded the heavy atmosphere of a western version of a continental café.

The long basement room, thick with smoke, gave forth to the dank exhalation of a place never thoroughly ventilated. At the small near-oak tables sat a collection of patrons who, gathering to act foreignly in an American environment, suggested a bird-house. The poet saw toucans, cassowaries and motheaten parrakeets,

noisily draining black coffee in an intellectual coma.

Here sat a mystic who had lost his family of five by fire; there, a gray, short-haired woman placidly stirring cigarette ashes into her coffee with one hand, and with the other holding "Linda Condon," from which she read to herself in a low monotone. Opposite her was a spinster from whose shrunken bosom and narrow shoulders a long neck arose almost without intermission, a memorial shaft for the fruition which nature had denied her.

Halfway down the room, behind an enormous cigar of the special brand which he could seldom afford, sat little Bill Rhett, pale, neat, stolid as a joss, and visibly wrapped in a protective cloak of contempt for his surroundings.

"I was expecting you," he said coldly, removing the tremendous cigar as carefully as if it had been an egg and he a conjurer. "Expecting you and hammering at my new story, which so few people will want to read, because none of its characters is either wholly good or wholly bad, and I myself cannot always tell what any of them should do, morally. I am the only uncaptured novelist who does not play Deity to his characters. It is my distinction."

"Make the most of it," said the poet indifferently, sitting down. "Why did you expect me?"

"Habit, purely. You are as habitual as a man eligible to be the master of a lodge."

The poet's torso stiffened with resolution.

"I am about to break all my habits. (Frank, bring me a mazagram and two cheese sandwiches, with rye bread cut thin.) I am leaving New York."

"Yes? When do you go?"

"Tonight."

The novelist pretended to give his attention to South American wall-decoration, in which densely-African negroes appeared to be filling United States mailsacks with coffee. From his lack of expression, he might have been counting the beans.

"I wish you luck," he said at last. "I shall miss you, Paul."

Wrightstone cleared his throat.

"A man must be a man or a mouse. I've been a mouse too long."

For an instant the Rhett eyeballs threatened to leave their sockets before the shock of the bromidiom. Then the heavy lids fell and the little man said mildly:

"Will you have a drink with me before you go? A stirrup-cup—to use the chaste language of your mood. I feel a bit sour at your going, and there's a spot not far from here where the real rye flows. Have you time?"

"I've a couple of hours," Wrightstone answered. "I'll go with you if you like, but I don't want anything to drink."

"This merciless young love!" the novelist murmured.

They sat in casual converse while the sandwiches were downed. Rhett's mood of gentle melancholy influenced the adventurer, leavening his buoyancy. After all, it was indisputable that an element of sadness was involved in leaving the old haunts. However determined, however certain of one's self one might be, one could not cut the bonds without a passing qualm.

They took a taxi to Ninth Avenue. It was in the early days of prohibition, before the marble hostleries had adjusted their mechanism to the new régime.

Leaving the cab, they entered an evil-smelling hallway and penetrated to a stale back room where a bar, running at half blast, supplied nepenthe to seedy votaries. There was the familiar air of lugubrious jollity.

They sat down at a wet table.

"I hate to drink alone," said Rhett. "Will you have just one?"

"No, I don't care for it."

"Oh, very well. Bring one and a beer," he said to the attending pugilist.

The drinks were brought, and the novelist sniffed above his glass with honest appreciation.

"I know appearances are against this distillation," he said, "but as a matter of fact it's excellent bourbon, not bar

whiskey at all. Jack Cade, here, is a friend of mine."

Wrightstone moved uneasily, sniffed, lit a Dromedary, threw it away.

"Oh, hell, tell him to bring me one," he said. "I have a lot of time to kill."

"Till when?"

"Oh, eleven or thereabouts."

He drank the whiskey, and another for companionship, and then commenced to speak philosophically. Liquor, which affected him quickly, usually turned his mind to speculative channels. Discussion of that sort was a prevalent vice among the Bohemians at the drinking-table.

Rhett was known as an exception who hated the chronic arguments, and ordinarily the poet would have been wary; but excitement had disarmed him, and he yielded to bland questioning concerning Pater, whose Marius he had just discovered. In his fierce reading he often turned up writers and subjects—Baudelaire, agnosticism—which belonged properly to the scholastic age, but which he had missed at the right time through laziness. Caught too late, they ravaged him like delayed measles.

The thought crossed his mind that his friend showed astonishing interest, for an anti-stylist, in the Pater verbiage, and for an insurgent, in Marius. But the third whiskey spread a soothing influence, and the fascination of settling once for all the universal problem of religion was strong.

The atmosphere of the room took on a mellow tinge imparted by a lifted mood. The witticisms of his friend, and more especially his own, were poignant. Time passed, and other whiskeys. He became conscious of exhilaration, and paradoxically, of weight. His flow of thought flagged a little, ebbed away from Marius. He felt no danger, however. Rhett urged him on, and he went to it brilliantly again. The Spirit of Romance joined hands with Philosophic Calm, and the two performed a fandango which seemed to him the epitome of argumentative dexterity.

His recent lack of practice in the art of drinking forced itself on his attention at the sixth or seventh bourbon. It was no time to stop, then. Epicureanism had evaporated, but pride forbade an inglorious halt. The oriental face of Rhett confronted him through the haze with a mocking smile. It was evident that the little man thought he could not hold his liquor. Preposterous!

Remembrance of an appointment obsessed him dimly, as though from another life, but he shook it off, and struggled through several more rounds. Friends apparently had joined them, companionable fellows, answering to "Frank" and "Doc." Frank had a number of uproarious tales to tell, and told them ruthlessly. After a time his braying laughter grew noxious.

He wondered why Rhett, ordinarily exclusive in his cups, did not banish the pestiferous Frank. At last he tried to do it himself, but no one paid attention to him. They were arguing, so far as he could understand, about a certain actress' age, and Doc offered to prove his contention by a record in possession of his mother-in-law, if they would accompany him and take the old lady a quart in an entirely respectable manner. The project was vetoed.

He relapsed into a sullen semi-coma, in which he seemed to be unconscious, but was in reality occupied by the exhausting task of keeping his brain in equilibrium over the roof of his mouth, from which it persisted in rolling. He knew when he was supported from the room and inserted into a cab with Rhett. His mind recorded events of the journey, but he had no memory. There was no more disturbance, only a great heaviness, against which he fought.

His head lost its balance during a roll of the cab, and would have fallen had not Rhett, who was beside him, propped it up.

"This is marvelous good nature on my part," he heard the little man say crossly, as though from a great distance. "My weight in my clothes is a hundred and thirty, and I'm far from

robust, and I think you weigh two hundred when you're drunk. Sit up, drat you!"

He was able to say nothing.

"This is what comes from altruism," the novelist complained, breathing hard from exertion. "Here I deliberately get you stewed to save you from a folly, exhibiting unparalleled self-control myself in abstaining—you might have seen with half an eye, if you'd had one clear, that I drank ginger ale after the first two. Unparalleled self-control, I say, and all I get for it is trouble—the trouble of hauling you here, an inert mass, and much worse, the trouble of being blamed for it by Ernestine, who, instead of thanking me, will say that I corrupted you. I hope she hits you with a hatchet, but she's too feeble-minded about you to do anything sensible like that. Just a foolish, doting old couple, that's all you are, you and she."

The taxi drew up in East 33rd Street, and he was hoisted out, and up into the vestibule by Rhett and the bandit. They propped him against the tiled wall while they quarrelled about the fare, and Rhett pushed the bell-button. The bandit backed away slowly and offensively. His bitter grumbling punctuated the wait like the porter's in "Macbeth."

At last the lock clicked.

"She is above!" said Rhett. "But whether for good or evil luck I know not."

He engineered the limp poet through the portal, and held him, swaying, while he spoke the valedictory.

"Go up to your wife, you fool. In reality you are more thoroughly married than most legal husbands."

He pushed the flaccid form toward the stairs, turned and walked briskly out and down the steps to the curb, where the irate bandit was fighting his engine.

"Henry, there is a fair lass waiting, at eleven, at one station or the other. Heads, Grand Central—tails, the Pennsylvania."

The flipped half-dollar clanked on the pavement and rolled neatly to the

bandit's feet. That worthy pocketed it dexterously.

"Six bits more, either way," said he.

"I leave it to you," said Rhett, shrugging. "Drive on."

CHAPTER V

THE poet, abruptly very sick, toiled at the stairs. Rhett's words passed instantly from his mind. He knew only that he wanted help. As he stumbled up, falling forward with his shins painfully against the treads, the familiar name rose instinctively to his lips.

"Ernestine! Ernestine! Help me!"

He managed to climb a few steps and repeated the call, mumblingly but with the voice of despair.

A door opened above and the giantess descended, an awe-inspiring manifestation—Lady Macbeth and the Mother of the Gracchi rolled into one.

Sweeping down upon the floundering poet she stretched out her arms dramatically.

"Rest here, my darling," she boomed, regardless of the hour. "What have they done to my boy?"

With vast tenderness she drew him to her bosom, and half led, half carried him up two flights of stairs. Unchecked for once in her fervor, she poured forth theatric endearments while she got off his clothes and put him to bed.

He slept as though drugged for several hours.

Close to the dawn, he awoke as a drinker sometimes rouses, with the eyes alone.

A low electric reading light, shaded, was on the table near the bed, and beside it sat Ernestine brooding, with her gaunt face in the shadow.

Motionless, save for his eyes, as a cataleptic victim, he lay watching her. His mind was clear and seemed to act in a vast space, searching, while the vision of his body saw Ernestine. He

traversed an ocean under stars, approached dark woods and heard savage cries stream out. Then the shouts became the mad clangor of a railway station, engine-whistles shrieked, the ceaseless crowd revolved. In the crowd there was one face that always eluded him. Suddenly he caught it—Lovely-Eyes!

Lovely-Eyes was waiting for him. But now she was not waiting at the station. The scene had changed again, the shadowy woods arose, and at their edge was the graceful figure of the island princess awaiting her lover, in mortal fear of her evil cousin Talait. Her lover had basely deserted her, but she would not believe him faithless, and holding out her hands in appeal she repeated her trust and love in haunting words.

"Paper and my pen, quick!" called the poet urgently to Ernestine. "Quick, before I lose it!"

Startled, the giantess was sufficiently inured to such outbursts of inspiration to retain the essential presence of mind. Habit clicked, her home was hers again, and scarcely fumbling, she thrust into the uncertain fingers, suddenly grown steady like a surgeon's holding the knife, the pen and a block of yellow copy paper.

The hand scratched words, erased, threw away a sheet impatiently. For about an hour the effort lasted—the time needed for the production of "Princess Ia's Love-Song," by far the finest, and by a fortunate and inexplicable chance the most popular, of Paul Wrightstone's poems.

But during the period of composition, the thoughts of the gigantic Ernestine, returned to her proper rôle of practical companion, revolved within the scope of twenty dollars, a sum which experience had taught her was the likely limit of remuneration for a masterpiece.



Dianthus Caryophyllus

By Major Owen Hatteras

RED-HAIRED girls with eyes that are metallic and full of green, spooky depths, like rain-puddles in a fir-forest. Red-haired girls with pale, orange freckles of irregular shape, like alphabet-noodles. Red-haired girls who wear their hair in high, wild heaps, like red-hot spaghetti. Red-haired girls with hair that is blood-red and startling when the light is behind them. Red-haired girls with brilliantly black eyebrows—too black, in fact, to be God's unassisted gift. Red-haired girls who wear verdigris-green frocks, and are too intelligent to go into rooms with blue wallpaper. Red-haired girls, slightly oxidized, riding in Fifth avenue buses with larval red-haired girls of the next generation, their lovely progeny and legacy to culture. Red-haired girls, made up with dead-white *poudre de riz* and scarlet lip-sticks, going into the Metropolitan Opera House with fat husbands. Red-haired girls whose hair shows a palpitant orange base, with overtones of azobenzene, benzopurpurin, rose bengale and fuchsin. Red-haired girls who whisper at tea-tables about poor drab blondes who use henna. Red-haired girls of Brinnhildian architecture, magnificent in opera cloaks but somewhat awful in the morning. Little,

mousy red-haired girls, mashed on Maeterlinck and Rabindranath Tagore. Red-haired girls who seem to be afire. Red-haired girls like smoky autumn days. Red-haired girls making the grand sacrifice for humanity by going into pale-blue trained-nurses' uniforms. Red-haired girls with complexions resembling the chests of alligators. Red-haired girls disguising themselves for the duel of sex by putting on Spanish mantillas. Red-haired girls glaring at one another, the vermillions against the scarlets, and the crimsons against both. Red-haired girls looking self-conscious every time they pass white horses. Red-haired girls with their hair bobbed, looking like fabulous chrysanthemums. Red-haired girls lying on the beach, scaring the oysters and scallops away. Red-haired girls dropping their eyes with fiendish art. Red-haired girls in full eruption, raising hell. Red-haired girls wondering whether to thank God for it or to curse Him. Red-haired brides. Red-haired widows. Red-haired grass-widows. Red-haired women marrying their fifth husbands. Red-haired women in battalions, regiments, brigades, divisions and army corps. Red-haired women. . . . Red-haired women! . . .



The Bitter Moment

By Morris Gilbert

ON the lawn of a smart club in the Bois de Boulogne, a club devoted to polo and the subtle art of passing time, an American gentleman, on an afternoon in early summer, was undergoing some of the bitterest moments of his career. He was sitting alone quite far from the side-lines. He sat where he did to be insured against any undignified exhibition when the ponies should come rocketing over the boundary in one of those thunderous cross-field charges that always send the spectators scattering.

It was one of the afternoons, lovely as a young matron, that occur so often in summer in Paris. There had been rain earlier in the day, but it had cleared, leaving the sky cool and the earth sweet. The sun, far down, sent its rays slantwise across the field, illuminating it with a gold haze and adding a purple shadow to the green of the trees opposite. On the field, eight young men,

"Bated like eagles having lately bath'd,"

were fulfilling their destinies after the fashion of centaurs in a sport which, they say, has but one peer, which too was born in the East and goes by the name of "pig-sticking." Only the best of sinew and skill and heart—in man and beast—play those games. Mediocrity can go to war and come through without pulling leather; not so in polo or pig-sticking.

In front of the club-house and under the trees and along the gravel drive beside the field were many men and women and children. There was a general or two, a diplomat or two, the complement of Comtesses that a pleasant

afternoon brings out in Paris, many British and Americans. An American orchestra kept young people swinging like pendulums between the dancing floor on the club verandah, and the side-lines. Tea was being served under the trees and everywhere was heard the sound of greetings and conversation and laughter. Now and then a sharp stroke would be heard from the field, and the nervous drum of hooves. Now and then a hacking scrimmage would bring forth the queer sound of many people commenting on a rapid action. The clapping of hands would signalize a goal won.

That was what the game meant to the American. From his chair he could see very little because of the shifting groups between him and the field. He began to follow the struggle by listening, not by trying to see.

He was a man close upon fifty, dressed in clothes which the tailor's booklets describe as "for afternoon wear"; not a tall man; quite obviously a proud, successful, and vigorous man. His name was Gurnet. He was the founder and owner of a thriving business in Philadelphia. He was a self-made man.

He had not come to Paris to attend polo games. He had come to discuss a business matter with various French, English, and American men of affairs. At a meeting, a friend, pleased with Gurnet's acumen and anxious to gratify him, had given him a card to the club, suggesting that it might afford him amusement.

It was not affording him amusement. On the other hand, it was giving him an

hour of the greatest unhappiness he had ever experienced. . . . He sat and watched the crowd.

A little American boy, dressed in a blue and white striped blazer suit, with a jockey cap to match, his knees bare, was pulling at the hand of a girl of eighteen, who was certainly his sister, and crying in a shrill voice for her to come and watch "that brown horse." His sister obviously did not care to watch the brown horse. She was watching a brown uniform in which an English officer was dressed. Animation marked their chat, and their eyes played as swiftly and gaily as so many swallows. . . .

"I'll meet you at Les Ambassadeurs at eight-thirty," called a young man in civilian clothes to a man of Gurnet's own age.

"Right you are, Sir," was the response, and the elder man made off with a wave of his hand. Now there are three ways in which the word "Sir" is said. This was evidently one of the two pleasant ways. . . .

At a little table where there were tea-cups and silver objects for the ritual, three women were sitting with a general in the uniform of the French Colonial forces. The women were different from the women Gurnet was in the habit of seeing Sunday after Sunday at the Chestnut Street Presbyterian Church. If he had thought about it he might have called them "superb." They were poised, delicate, rare with the modelled rarity which is the lot of the fortunate. None of them was young. One of them, at least, was American, since an American boy, passing, cried, "Hello, mother," lifting his hat. It surprised Gurnet that the mother was as old as her son had betrayed her to be. . . . The son pursued his immediate devices, which were to reach the dancing floor before the music stopped. . . .

This young gentleman interested Gurnet, giving rise to certain meditations. He must have been about sixteen years of age, not older. There was a buoy-

ancy, a coltishness about him that announced sixteen. He was slight, with a kiddish slightness; active with a kid's activity. Yet, Gurnet observed, he was not dressed the way he (Gurnet) was dressed when he was sixteen. The chap's clothes were beautifully tailored, chosen with evident discrimination (Gurnet's clothes at that age were chosen with a different motive—they must wear like iron). To be sure, they were not neat. There was dust on his shoes, and the laps of his soft collar were not buttoned. Even, Gurnet observed, the chap's hair needed cutting at the back of his neck, like that of so many Frenchmen and other foreigners. But, somehow, it didn't seem to make any difference to this fellow that his brogues were dusty, his collar-laps unbuttoned, his hair a little unkempt. There he was—dancing off with a dainty, slender flapper with as much evident pleasure as (Gurnet remembered) he himself used to feel at the age of sixteen at playing one-o'-cat—and perhaps more.

Gurnet imagined himself at sixteen. On school-days he wore his Old Suit. This was a baggy, lumpy suit, with inadequate pockets that were always tearing. It was never pressed. As it grew older it had a queer smell. It had short trousers.

His school-day amusements were games with other boys, long recriminating arguments, afternoons in barns. Walks in the vicinity of Wilmington, Delaware (it was later that Gurnet went to Philadelphia), were the features of Sunday afternoons—long walks with gawky boy friends whose interests were the gossip of the high-school, the raising of warts and chickens, the saving of coupons, and the doing of chores for pocket-money—"allowances" had not been generally introduced into Wilmington at that date.

Girls entered rarely into that period of Gurnet's and his friends' lives, except as evoked in numberless callowly imagined "hot stories"—stories that went their round in whispers behind grimy paws with an accompaniment of snickers. Very occasionally there were

"parties." Then it was that Gurnet wore his Other Suit and stood about uncomfortably with boys in a group, giggling; while the girls stood about in another group, also giggling. A semblance of unity was at times established by some devoted elder, when games were played. But the games always ended in scuffling among the boys and masculine showing-off. Social intercourse at best consisted of intimations of wickedness in the matter of fooling teachers and playing hookey. At these intimations the girls would be shocked—as if they believed them; and the boys barbarously triumphant.

All this, Gurnet reflected, was to him the normal background of American social life, at sixteen. It seemed to be natural, democratic, national—variations were out of order. . . .

Was this, then, Gurnet pondered, an American boy, who at the age of sixteen danced merrily with girls on pleasant afternoons, took off his hat to his mother, wore beautiful clothes with nonchalance, and applauded polo games in the Bois de Boulogne? Certainly this boy was not the kind of boy Gurnet had been. . . . Then a revealing memory came to him—there had been two boys in Wilmington who might have been this lad's chums. Gurnet remembered them, with a distaste that even thirty years had not erased—how he and his friends had hated them!

They were sons of the wealthiest man in Wilmington. They had first won the distinction of unpopularity at the ages of five and six respectively by wearing kilts and riding in a dog-cart with a governess. That was the first of a series of breaches of the prevailing code that kept them in particular disfavour for years. They vanished from Wilmington at an early age, having been sent to a private school in New England, but they would reappear at vacation-times.

At those times they acted just as this young sprig was acting now. They displayed no aloofness from girls at the parties to which they went. They danced, they talked, they laughed, natu-

rally and without shame. They seemed to enjoy themselves. They wore expensive clothes. Loud was the scorn of young Wilmington at these exhibitions of "sissiness."

Gurnet was older by thirty years as he sat here today at Bagatelle in the Bois de Boulogne. There was a little recasting of values to be done—he was learning, perhaps, a lesson. Was it, after all, scorn, or was it envy that had animated his boy friends years before? In the midst of awkwardness, shyness, the majority-rule of a primitive code, what place was there for grace, for ease, for charm? Gurnet was troubled. . . .

Then, with rather a start, he recalled a final episode in the conflict of his code against the two. There had come a day, two or three years later, when indignation had boiled over among his friends. The sissies had affronted the code once too often—they must be made to suffer physical torment. "Butch," a redoubtable champion, was designated to take-it-out-of-them, one at a time. In a back lot a fist fight took place, but only one. A wave of shame rippled over Gurnet at the memory of that fight—for democracy, the norm, the code, in the person of "Butch" was roundly beaten—beaten by straight lefts flashing over a slovenly guard time and time again, straight lefts directed by a cool young man whose grace and apparent softness disguised a fine physique and pugilistic skill.

Gurnet fancied a resemblance between that deft boxer of thirty years ago and one of the young men who rode down-field after the little bamboo ball. They were the same sort—but if that were true, Gurnet was in a quandary—a quandary about society!

Obviously something was wrong.

Gurnet was no fool—in Wilmington he was regarded by his former cronies as their greatest credit. Wealth, position, honour during the war (when the Government called upon him to accept a yearly stipend of one dollar), such were his—and he was a free American! He had done it himself—he had gone the limit. He had risen as high as any man could. Yet here, at Bagatelle,

watching a silly, extravagant and dangerous game, among people without half the force, the wisdom, the self-reliance that he possessed, Gurnet was unhappy, lonely, out of it. He was feeling the way he used to feel when the two young Wilmingtonian expatriots would invade the particular parlour where his groups of boy and girl friends were snickering. He was beginning at the bottom again! . . . Why didn't these people admire him? Some of them he knew by sight. If he were in Philadelphia or Wilmington, he would introduce himself. Then he would become the center of admirers—he was used to it at Chamber of Commerce meetings, where he was much admired. But here—he—simply—wasn't! People here didn't admire what he was. They admired something else. . . or perhaps they didn't admire anything . . . perhaps they simply liked to laugh.

After all, wasn't that as good a thing to do as anything else? . . . Laughter! there were peals of it, tinklings of it, breezes of it, around. Gurnet wasn't laughing—but he wanted to!

No. Depression had Gurnet fast. Resentment, too—but resentment of something it had never before occurred to him to resent. He was resenting—his father and his grandfather! This was sheer unreason. The only cause he could think of for this resentment, this real bitterness, this thing that was somehow close to hate, and was certainly rage, was—that his father's father had not dressed his son in kilts, and sent him riding with a governess in a dog-cart and that the son had not done with Gurnet the same way! . . .

But in that case Gurnet would have been laughing, at Bagatelle—laughing gayly instead of morosely sitting, an unheard messenger who had condescended to come across the sea to explain democracy to civilization. . .

"George broke his stick," cried a

man. "Too bad!—he had a clear field and his pony on top of the ball. . ."

Gurnet saw George gallop to the sidelines and seize another mallet from a groom; tossing the broken one away in a great eclipse. Gurnet noted that the young man's name was George, which did not convey a great deal of satisfaction. . .

A French matron with her seventeen-year-old son approached another matron with her seventeen-year-old daughter. The first matron presented her son to the daughter. Son and daughter, as slight and swift and fiery as Pierrot and Pierrette, pouted like the children they were.

"What a bore it is for her to meet me," thought the young man, "I hate her."

"What a bore it is for him to meet me," thought the young girl, "I hate him."

With gesture as precise as automations, she put forth her hand; he, frowning, touched it and bore it to his lips. At the same instant both petulantly turned their backs to each other. He murmured "Enchanté"; she murmured "Merci." The matrons beamed in placid benignity. The episode had taken thirty seconds. . .

Soon after, Gurnet bowed to a newspaper man he knew. Gurnet would have been glad to take the other by the arm and talk to him for an hour. It would have helped him to adjust himself. But the newspaper man was chasing an ambassador. . .

Drum, drum, went the hoofs of the ponies. Crack, went mallet on ball. Whup, went the saxophone on the verandah. Chatter, laughter, cries, applause made a jumble of sound in Gurnet's ears. Everybody was happy, expansive, satisfied—everybody but Gurnet, who had found that the world has many limitations which cannot be overcome—even by a self-made man.



Répétition Générale

By H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan

§ 1

MEDITATION.—The gravest danger confronting a critic of the arts (or of life, for that matter) is the danger of succumbing to a messianic delusion. All the circumstances of his trade conspire to wobble him. Immediately he begins to acquire a following, he discovers that it is a following chiefly made up of the congenitally subaltern type of men and women—natural converts, lodge joiners, me-toos, followers of circus parades. It is precious seldom that he ever gets a positive idea out of them; what he usually gets is mere emotional ratification. This troop corrupts him in various ways. For one thing, it enormously reinforces his belief in his own ideas, and so makes him bombastic, stiff and unintelligent—in brief, precisely everything that he ought not to be. And for another thing, it tends to make him (by a curious contradiction) a bit pliant and politic: he begins to estimate new ideas, not in proportion as they are sound or amusing, but in proportion as they are likely to please his customers. So beset, front and rear, he quickly sinks to the level of a professor, and his subsequent proceedings are interesting no more.

The true aim of a genuine critic is certainly not to make converts. If he knows anything at all, he must know that very few of the persons who are susceptible to conversion are worth converting. Their minds are intrinsically flabby and parasitical, and it is certainly not very exciting sport to agitate minds of that kind. Moreover, he must always harbour a grave doubt about most of

the ideas that they lap up so greedily—it must occur to him not infrequently, in the silent watches of the night, that much that he preaches is sheer buncombe. I can't imagine any idea—that is, in the domain of æsthetics—that is palpably and incontrovertibly sound. All that I am familiar with, and, in particular, all that I propagate most vociferously, seem to me to contain a core of quite obvious nonsense. I thus try to avoid cherishing them too lovingly, and it always gives me a shiver to see anyone else gobble them at one gulp. Criticism, at bottom, is indistinguishable from skepticism. Both launch themselves headlong at the common human tendency to accept whatever is approved, to take in ideas ready-made, to be responsive to mere rhetoric and gesticulation. A critic who believes in anything absolutely is bound to that something quite as helplessly as a Christian is bound to the Freudian piffle in the Book of Revelation. To that extent, at all events, he is unfree and unintelligent, and hence a bad critic.

§ 2

The Question of Vanities.—A woman's advantage over a man lies in a matter of vanities. A woman is vain, and makes no bones about it. Her vanity is admitted, taken for granted. A man is equally vain, but seeks to conceal it. To this effort at concealment a woman is privy. Thus, where a man in the presence of a woman is confounded by the frank openness of her vanity, a woman, cognizant of the man's sham and evasion, and penetrating it, has him at her mercy.

§ 3

The Mime Tested.—The true test of an actor lies in the way he shakes hands on the stage. Not one in a thousand can do it realistically. The average certainly never does it as it is done by normal men in real life; he does it like an actor meeting another actor in front of the Lambs' Club. That is to say, he *overdoes* it. The meeting of palms and digits is not enough; he must make the thing obscene by clutching his victim's shoulder, or by clinging and fawning a bit, or by gurgling. On the stage, save rarely, one always sees actors, not human beings. Harold, on meeting his sister Evelyn in a play, invariably rushes up to her and hugs her. In real life, among normal folks, such an act would cause Evelyn to land a left hook on his eye, and accuse him of being drunk.

§ 4

Motive.—Perhaps the most irritating thing in the life of a critic of the arts is the fixed determination of persons to read motives into what he writes. I have yet to write a highly favourable or unfavourable criticism of anything or anybody that some ass has not professed to find a motive therein. I have no motive save to write the most honest criticism I am capable of. Yet if this honest criticism happens to find merit in the work of a friend or lack of merit in the work of an enemy, I am accused of favouring my friend and attacking my enemy. The truth is, perhaps, that a person capable of good work is my friend, and one capable of bad work my enemy. The motive-diggers always read the sentence the other way 'round.

§ 5

The Old Subject.—The venerable *Ladies' Home Journal* announces that many of its readers have requested that it set up a department devoted to beauty hints—how to enamel an oxidized cheek, what sort of rouge to use with a blue dress, how to make *poudre de riz* stick

in hot weather, etc.—but that it has decided against the idea, and in favour of a department instructing its readers, now all voters, in the mysteries of politics. One fancies Dr. Edward W. Bok snickering in his retirement. Ed never made any such mistake. At the bottom of his editorial theory there was always the plain doctrine that a normal woman is always a hundred times more interested in catching a man than she is in politics. This doctrine remains perfectly sound, despite the fact that women now vote. The political curiosity that a small minority of them exhibited during the campaign for the suffrage is now almost extinct. Even the most ardent and hopeful of the suffragettes, with the ballot in their hands, don't know what to do with it. Nine-tenths of their followers have already gone back to the natural, primary and eternal concerns of their charming sex. For six months past I haven't met a solitary woman who had anything to say about politics. Nor one who didn't show plain signs that she had been giving powerful thought to her ankles, her figure and her complexion.

§ 6

Æsthetic Document.—Proof of the progress of the fine arts in America toward 100% Americanism, from the roster of the new *National Symphony Orchestra* of New York:

Willem Mengelberg, *Conductor*
Paul Eisler, *Assistant Conductor*

First Violins

Scipione Guidi
Adolph Bak
Otto Roth
Alexander Ribarsch
Alberto Bachman
William Dorfman
Maurice Grunberg
Joel Belov
Rudolph Bauerkeller
Harry Levy
Leonard D'Amico
William Artzt
Rudolph Ringwall
Ralph Henkle
Leon Trebacz

Second Violins

Alexis Kudisch
Arriga Fishberg
Victor Kasper
Andrew Stirn
Joseph Gewirtz
Morris Kreiselman
Leon Barzin
George Rabinowitz
Jacob Berger
Isidor Strassner
Charles Kunen
Jacob Gade

Violas

Theodore Fishberg

Hans Werner
David Reggel
Florian Wittman
Sam Rosen
Vladimir Berlin
Leonidas Verona
H. Van Veen
Morris Tartas
Wilhelm Kautsenbach
Ludwig Starzinski
Myron Sweet
Max Voigt

Violoncellos

Cornelius Van Vliet
Charles Wenzel
Abraham Bass
William Feder
Fritz Bruch
Emil Foglmann
Bruno Steinke
Rosolino De Maria
Maurice Dufrasne
Abraham Edison

Basses

Anselme Fortier
Ernest Huber
Sol Elkind
Fishel Fishberg
Joseph Krausse
Morris Cherkasky
Leon Ziporkin
Edouarde Flocco

Flutes

Daniel Maquarre
John Fabrizio
Max Kosloff

Piccolo

Max Kosloff

Oboes

Attilio Marchetti
Mario Bottesini
Fred De Angelis

Clarinets

Albert Chiaffarelli
Angelo Chiaffarelli
Pirro Gentile

Gaetano Tagliavoro
Valentino Trovato

Bass Clarinet

Pirro Gentile

Bassoons

Benjamin Kohon
Ferdinand Del Negro
Azelio Fantini

Contra-Bassoon

Azelio Fantini

Horns

Domenico Caputo
Joseph Febbraio
Benjamin Hudish
Edward Horowitz
Alfred Resch
Samuel Pertchonok

Trumpets

Vincent Buono
Benjamin Klatzkin
Max Schlossberg
Philip Klatzkin

Trombones

Mario Falcone
Charles E. Gerhard
Leroy Haines

Tuba

Emil M. Weber

Harp

Theodore Cella
Laura Newell

Timpani

Richard Becher
William Strelesin

Battery

Jacob Wolf
Albert Risch
Ruben Katz
August Neustadter

Librarians

Henry Boewig
Luigi Zavalloni
Emil Magnani

the presence of a woman always becomes suddenly talkative when he gets into a crowded elevator with her. Let there be so much as one other man in the elevator and he will promptly recover his assurance and gabble endless amiable nonsense to her.

§ 9

The School of Manners.—In nearly all civilized countries the school of manners is the court. The usages sanctioned in his presence by the king are the usages prevailing among all who pretend to refinement. But in the United States there is no court, and the manners of the White House are often so barbarous that not even social pushers are degraded enough to imitate them. Within historic times there has been a President who invariably addressed all women as "Ma'm" and sucked his moustache after drinking coffee. Worse, there has been a First Lady who wore woolen stockings and served crullers at tea. Thus Americans of a delicate fancy have to seek example elsewhere. It is provided for them by the stage. What the actors do today is done by the *haut ton* of Philadelphia and St. Louis tomorrow, and by the aristocracy of Dubuque and Nashville, Tenn., the day after. It was actors who taught the American nobility how to wear their handkerchiefs in their coat-sleeves, and how to slide out their arms to look at their wrist-watches, and how to eat ice-cream with a fork. Wherever one goes in American society one sees laborious imitations of John Drew. When John put on horn-rimmed spectacles he was imitated by at least 40% of the young society men of Kansas City, Baltimore and Portland, Ore.

Skeptical Note.—I am always skeptical of the man who tells me of the big "offers" he has recently had. I always notice that he sticks to his old job.

§ 8

Observation XXXIV.—A man who is uncomfortably dull and taciturn in

Unluckily, the actors suffer from the very same lack that the layman suffers from, to wit, the lack of a court. In its absence, they imitate visiting English actors, who in turn get their ideas from the Court of St. James's. Thus an American gentleman in, say, Louisville or Cincinnati, shakes hands, eats soup and enters a drawing-room in a manner

that is an imitation of some American actor's imitation of an English actor's imitation of what is done in Mayfair—in brief, an imitation in the fourth degree. No wonder it is sometimes rather crude. This crudity is especially visible in speech habits. The American actor does his best to imitate the pronunciation and intonation of his English colleagues, but inasmuch as his name, before he became Gerald Cecil, was probably Rudolph Goetz or Terence Googan, he frequently runs aground upon laryngeal impossibilities. Here we have an explanation of the awful fist that society folk in Des Moines and Altoona make of pronouncing such words as *bath*, *necessarily*, *secretary* and *lieutenant* in the authentic English manner. All such words are filtered through Gaelic or Teutonic or Semitic gulleets before they reach the ultimate consumer.

In France, as in the United States, there is no court, and so the determination of social usages is also thrown on the actors. But there the state of affairs is measurably more comfortable, for on the one hand an aristocracy survives, even though the court has been abolished, and on the other hand the recognized experts in decorum are all members of one theatrical troupe, that of the Comédie Française, and are thus able to consult one another frequently, and to maintain a coherent tradition. The manners of such a man as Guitry père or Coquelin aîné are determined primarily by what is done by the fossil relics of the *ancien régime*, and secondarily by an exchange of views with a few equals. The same thing, perhaps, could be accomplished if the governors of the Lambs Club should appoint a standing committee to fix the fashionable pronunciation of all disputed words, and to nominate the correct manner of lacing boots, holding a coffee-cup, kissing one's grandmother, and making love. Unfortunately, such a committee will never be appointed. There are so many star actors in America that it would be of unworkable size, and they hate one another so violently that they would

never agree. Thus the present system will probably prevail indefinitely. It has its drawbacks, but it at least works. Without it, there would be social anarchy.

§ 10

Government by Propaganda.—The exploits of the Creel press bureau during the late war gave startling proof of how easy it is, with a fair chance, to drive the boobs crazy with propaganda—to make them believe anything, no matter how idiotic. The lesson was not lost on the moneyed gentlemen who actually run the Republic, in peace as in war. Ever since the armistice they have made more assiduous efforts than ever before to gain control of the newspapers, the chief agents of all propaganda. Almost every large American city has seen at least one more popular newspaper fall into their hands. The result is already visible. Socialism is steadily losing ground in the land, and so is what remains of Liberalism. The boobs are being diligently trained to regard every sort of political dissent as a threat at the very fundamentals of the Republic. Worse, they are being trained to put it down by force, without even giving it a fair hearing. The astounding carryings-on of the American Legion are the direct fruits of this new and well-managed propaganda.

The Socialists and other such dreamers face a very serious situation. All their efforts to fight capitalism with its own weapon are plainly doomed to failure. If they tried to set up newspapers in opposition to the capitalist newspapers, the competition of the latter would soon reduce them to bankruptcy. Moreover, whenever one of their newspapers showed signs of attaining a large circulation it would be denied the mails by the Postoffice. This was actually done during the war in the case of the *New York Call*. Well, then, what is left to the Socialists? How are they going to reach the boobs? By making speeches in the street? Let them try it on a large scale, and at once the police

will beat them and jail them. By sending circulars through the mails? It would cost too much, and the Postoffice would soon put a stop to it. Thus, from the sidelines, the Marxians seem to be up against it. Capitalism, as they say at the University of Kansas, has them hog-tied.

Some day or other, of course, some extra-clever Socialist may invent a new means of propaganda—one that the current camorra of usurers, bureaucrats and police cannot put down—worse, one that they can not seize and make use of. Such a device, as I hint, is conceivable. But I'd surely not like to be given the job of conceiving it.

§ 11

Admiration.—I often find myself admiring unimportant and inferior men for absurd and peculiar reasons. Thus I admire Houdini, the vaudeville handcuff performer, because he is the shrewdest, most ingenious and most effective self-advertiser in present-day America. Thus I admire Billy Sunday for his amazingly ironic and successful hypnosis of the yap mind. Thus I admire Carpentier, the French pug, for his romantic astuteness in profiting by what measure of polite social contact he is locally vouchsafed. We all have such grotesque and ignoble admirations, yet hesitate to confess them.

§ 12

Waving the Leg.—I note by the provincial newspapers that a fresh campaign against the current mode of dancing has been begun in the hinterland. Concupiscent Methodist preachers, forgetting the poor fancy-girls for a while, entertain their customers with gaudy accounts of the nose-rubbing, leg-shaking and belly-wriggling that goes on at fashionable shindigs, and call upon the police to put it down. The usual bosh. There is, in fact, nothing very carnal about any of the prevailing mazurkas and varsoviennes. They are a good deal less lascivious than some of the dances

of years ago. The worst that happens in them is that a young man hugs his girl, and that she apparently enjoys it.

Well, is there anything very shocking about that? The perpetuation of the human race depends upon the plain fact that every year a sufficiency of young men are seized with a desire to hug the same number of more or less pretty misses, and that the misses permit and even encourage the business, and that out of it springs a mutual yearning to go before the altar of God and get an ecclesiastical permit to pursue it *ad lib*. Isn't it better to start proceedings openly, honestly and without false shame, as is now done in all civilized societies? Or do the experts in morals prefer the secret, furtive method in vogue in the hog and foreign-missions states—that is, the method of courting in a dark parlour, with Pa and Ma gone to bed? A study of the illegitimacy statistics would throw a powerful light upon the subject. In the most pious town in Nebraska, I venture to guess, the percentage of adolescents taken in sin is at least six times as high as it is in New York City.

The real objection to the current dances is not that they are lewd, but that the music to which they are danced is idiotic. There is nothing unnatural or reprehensible about a young man (or even an old one) aspiring to hug a pretty gal, nor is there anything unnatural or reprehensible about a pretty gal essaying to inoculate him with the aspiration by displaying her charms. What is disgusting is that the great majority of Americans have been so debauched by music out of negro kraals in savage Africa and black-and-tan bordellos in the river towns of the South that they have come actually to like it—in fact, to prefer it to music that is seemly and civilized, say, the waltzes of Johann Strauss. Worse, a taste for this appalling and obscene cacophony is not confined to the actual dancers; the phonograph has carried it to the whole population. Many of the yokels who hear dancing denounced, I daresay, go home and put on the records. To listen

to such stuff without leaping up and smashing the machine is to confess to a degradation that is certainly a million times worse than that of the cutie who shows her ankles to the sophomores and is not above taking a hearty share in it when God sends her the felicity of being hugged.

§ 13

Dramatic Criticism.—The fundamental concerns of sound dramatic criticism are simply these: (1) Does the play interest?, and (2) Whom?

§ 14

Essay on the Progress of Literary Taste and Understanding in America.—From a catalogue of autographs issued by the estate of the late George D. Smith, the Jack Dempsey of American book-dealers:

294. Ibsen (Henrik). *The Swedish Zola*. Short A. L. S., commencing, etc.

§ 15

Synonym for Parlour Socialists.—Sub-Debs.

§ 16

A Purse Hung Up.—I hereby renew my offer to donate \$100,000 in cash to the Superannuated Clergymen's Fund of the Methodist Episcopal Church if anyone will produce evidence that any of the great patriots who robbed the government under the shadow of the Shipping Board during the war has been indicted, convicted, jailed and forced to disgorge. Meanwhile, I offer a lithograph of Abraham Lincoln to any citizen of the United States who will take oath that he so much as *believes* that any such disgorging will ever be brought to pass.

§ 17

The Box-office Play.—A few years ago, in a book called "The Popular Theater," I included a chapter on "What

the Public Wants," the contention of which was that any playwright who knew his business even fairly well and who cared to do so might easily achieve popular and highly remunerative success. The observation brought forth a barrage of custard pies. My nose was spattered with pastry from Springfield, Mass., on the east to Portland, Ore., on the west. I was dubbed a jackass in three different varieties of English, and a fellow fit for the asylums in six. I became visibly perturbed. Was it possible that I had gone too far? I pondered the contention anew. And when the estimable Archer brought up an artillery of blueberry tarts in *Harper's*, I deemed it best to betake myself to the open spaces to meditate upon it profoundly.

After this protracted meditation, all that I can do is to repeat what I wrote originally. No writer of reasonable skill who has deliberately set himself to make money in the amusement world has, in the period since the book was published, failed to do so. Further, he has made much more money than he could possibly have made, with the same amount of ingenuity and exertion, in any other field of enterprise. I need set down no catalogue of names by way of proof. The names will occur readily to anyone who knows the theater intimately. To test the hypothesis, all that one has to do is to try to think up an exception.

Box-office failures in the theater are rarely the portion of playwrights who premeditatively lodge their attack against the box-office. When a box-office playwright fails, he is generally found to have been guilty of a trace of vanity and to have attempted to give his play a veneer of quality. This quality he has been incapable of, and his play has fallen between two stools. Or, again, he may honestly have tried to forget the box-office for the time being. This last is what confuses the pie artillery. It forgets that Winchell Smith never fails when he aims at the box-office; it recalls that he failed ("The Only Son") when that aim wasn't primarily his in-

tention. Thus, too, with George M. Cohan, and with his "The Miracle Man." Thus, too, with Samuel Shipman and with his "The Unwritten Chapter." Thus, too, with Avery Hopwood and with his "This Woman and This Man," with Willard Mack and with his "So Much For So Much," with George Scarborough and with his "Moonlight and Honeysuckle." George V. Hobart, Owen Davis, George Broadhurst, Roi Cooper Megrue, Harry James Smith, Aaron Hoffman, Max Marcin, Guy Bolton—these and many others like them have hit the box-office bull's-eye with great regularity. You will, unless I am seriously mistaken, search in vain for a similarly grotesque and prosperous record in any other form of business.

§ 18

Cultural Note.—From a long review of Knut Hamsun's "Hunger" in the Portland *Oregonian*, a leading gazette of the American Legion and Dr. Doane's Kidney Pill belt:

It is not a pretty, pure love story . . . It is rather a picture of salacious passion . . . which no reputable American author surely would care to see in print, and with his name attached.

This, in brief, is what is the matter with American literature. And this is what is the matter with American criticism.

§ 19

A Masterpiece.—Probably the worst novel ever written by a serious novelist is Balzac's "Père Goriot." Imagine making a hero of that nauseous old idiot, that senile and unspeakable stone-head! One sympathizes, in the end, with his harpies of daughters, just as one sympathizes with Simon Legree in "Uncle Tom's Cabin." The two books, in fact, have much in common. Goriot is the French Uncle Tom and his daughters are Legree. But it seems to me that Mrs. Stowe did a better book. When I read "Uncle Tom's Cabin" it

merely makes me swear; when I read "Father Goriot" it makes me sick. Here, as usual, the French worst is worse than our worst. The French have produced the best painters of modern times, but their book illustrations are so bad that they almost make ours look like works of art. They have superb buildings directly under their noses, but the flat-houses in Paris are even uglier than those in New York. They lead the world in monumental sculpture and architecture, but there are tombstones in Père Lachaise Cemetery (not a few, but thousands, and not over corner grocers, but over the first men of France) that make the average American bone-yard look like the Roman Forum.

§ 20

Votes vs. Power.—Now that the ban upon enemy literature and philosophy has been lifted by the home-loving bravos of the Vigilantes, the National Defense Society and other such noble bands of trench-dodgers, I venture to voice the hope that someone will think to translate Dr. Hans Delbrück's "Regierung und Volkswille" (Government and the Popular Will), a work that originally appeared eight or ten years ago. Lately the learned professor revised it in the light of the war, and his new edition has been very favourably reviewed by the London *Times*. Delbrück has been chief editor of the *Preussische Jahrbuch* since 1899, and is perhaps the foremost living German historian. During the war he was denounced as a numskull by professors in such great American seminaries as Amherst, the Ohio Wesleyan and Yale, but he remains nevertheless a very sharp old fellow, and his "Regierung und Volkswille" is full of penetrating criticism of democracy.

His central objection to it is that the theory upon which it is founded is false—to wit, the theory that popular elections reveal the popular will upon all the chief issues before the state. This, of course, is not true. The popular elector seldom if ever decides between

clear issues; his judgment is always corrupted by the emotional appeal of dominating personalities. Moreover, the actual issues often do not get before him at all; those that he is called upon to choose between are simply election-eering issues. The real struggle for power in a democracy thus goes on behind the scenes, and usually in secret. The contestants here do not let the public know what they are fighting about. Instead of seeking votes by telling, they seek votes by bedazzling the boobs with childish heroics, war-cries, phrases, heroes. Thus the plain man is hornswoggled into thinking that he is consulted and that his decision is final. It is as to *who* shall win—that is, what agent of what esoteric force—but it is surely not as to *what* shall win. Voting for a Roosevelt, he elects a Pennsylvania Railroad. Voting for a Harding, he elects a National City Bank.

It is this disparity between the obvious issue and the inner issue that makes the political struggle under democracy so dishonest and so ridiculous. Practical politics under a despotism consists simply in finding out what the despot wants, and executing it faithfully. But under a democracy it consists in deluding and stampeding the despot, *i.e.*, the mob. Its first and foremost business is to keep this buncombe going by inventing an endless series of new shibboleths and enthusiasms, most of them bearing no sort of contact with the struggle for power that goes on in the dark, and many of them quite devoid of any intelligibility whatsoever. It often happens, indeed, that the phrase used as bait for the boobery is at complete variance with the aim sought to be established by the will-group employing it. This was plainly the case in the national election of 1916. Here a typical democratic mob-master, eager to take the United States into the war, faced a populace obviously averse to war, and so he had to carry out his enterprise by posing as an advocate and guardian of peace. Once the mob had made him secure in that character, he straightway flew to arms.

But maybe I here under-rate the self-deception of one in whose soul, after all, there was always much more of the popinjay than of the rogue. What is to be remembered in every such case is that the politician is not the primary agent. He belongs to the victimized majority rather than to the machiavelian minority; he is, at best, no more than a kept captain, and if he ends by believing in his own idiotic war-cries, it is no more than a proof that he is full of human juices. In the case I cite there are historians who argue that the prater of peace was actually more or less honestly pacific. But certainly no sane man will ever argue that the will-group behind him was of like mind. That will-group threw off all disguise the moment the ballots were safely in the box, and its subsequent career of legal and patriotic (and hence highly laudable) brigandage let in a brilliant light upon the true nature of its original aims and motives.

The history of a democracy is largely a history of just such swindles. The bewildered mob-man is forever holding coroner's inquests upon the mortal remains of his great passions of yesterday. Today a new idea enchants him, and he is full of Christian enthusiasm for it; tomorrow he discovers that it was a mere "cloak to goe invisible" for some enterprise having no sort of relation to it, save perhaps the depressing relation of complete antithesis. Often enough the idea is quite impossible of execution, even presuming the existence of good faith; here the swindle has its rise, not in the sinister operations of some concealed will, but in the very nature of things. The mob-man, in fact, is always crying for the moon. But while he divides himself into two tatterdemalion hosts, each led by leaders who tell him they will get it for him, the ordinary business of the world must go on on more earthly planes, and with greater regard for realism. It is on these planes that the so-called Invisible Government lives and has its being.

That government is composed of men who deal, not with glittering phrases,

but with adamantine facts. Capital is such a fact—money, credit, the whole machine of orderly trade. The venality of politicians—their sole concern with their jobs—is another. The infinite credulity and sentimentality of the plain people is yet another. It is in terms of such harsh facts that the actual work of the state is carried on, even under a democracy. That work involves conflict, the nice adjustment of varying ideas, the triumph of will over will. Despite the alarms of those who scent the process without ever understanding it, there is seldom unanimity among these concealed masters. It is quite unusual, indeed, for all of them or nearly all of them to find their interests identical. Too often they make war upon one another in a Berserker manner, and great bugaboos emerge from the conflict to startle and ride the general.

I often wonder that some historian does not trace out the ultimate consequences, in public turmoil and epidemic indignation, of the old conflict between capital the manufacturer and capital the merchant—that is, between the protective tariff and free trade. For generations the Republic was rocked by the struggle, and men came to imperishable fame by mouthing the gaudy phrases that it threw off, and millions of anonymous Americans tore all their passions to tatters trying to rise to its incessant challenges. The inner history of the Civil War has been investigated, but the long tariff battle is still spoken of in terms of McKinley, Dingley and Payne, which is precisely as if the American Revolution were spoken of in terms of Molly Pitcher and the Hessians. Again, what lay under the raucous League of Nations debate was probably no more than a contest between capital thinking internationally and capital still clinging to nationalism—between a will to conquer the world and a will to safeguard the loot so ripe for the harvest at home.

Here was a genuine clash of wills. But in the practical politics of the time there was nothing save a clash of hollow words—phrases to beguile the inflammatory and unintelligent.

H. G. Wells, sensing this sharp distinction between the sham duel that goes on in sight of the populace and the real duel that goes on behind the scenes, is full of plans, in his "Outline of History," for bringing the latter out upon the stage. What we have now, he says, is a "community of faith and obedience"—that is, the plain people are beguiled into acquiescence by appeals to their loyalties, their prejudices, their whole outfit of stupidities, and so kept from showing too much curiosity as to what is going on *in camera*. What he proposes to set up is a "community of will," which is to say, a social organization in which the plain people will be acutely conscious of all the interior issues, and so be in a position to settle them realistically and in their own fashion, without the present confusing intervention of bogus issues.

A pleasing programme, but not one that enters into practical politics. The forgotten factor is the populace's age-old credulity and sentimentality, its insatiable appetite for being fooled. The thing obviously goes beyond the bounds of a misfortune; too often it seems to take on the proportions of a grand passion. Let one demagogue lift the curtain ever so little, and there is always another one to pull it down again, or to choke the opening with flags, bunting and buckets of tears, or to draw attention from it by giving a more familiar and hence a more charming show across the stage. In the long run, the odds are inevitably upon this demagogue of the second order. The plain people distrust and dislike truth-tellers, for the truth is something harsh, and they prefer their ease. It is the most comforting soothsayer who is always on top, once the clash of tin swords is over.



The Crown

By Grace Fallow Norton

A LONG the quays, where ships were being unloaded and porters were running to and fro, the crowd pressed about a young man. He wore a strange costume of blue and purple and they were questioning him concerning his country, for he had just stepped from a high black ship.

"In my country," he said, "we have a saying that the crown will dissolve with the last king. We beheaded many of our kings, poisoned and imprisoned others. The crown did not disappear, for there was always a son or a nephew or cousin ready to seize it and to mount the jeweled throne. Once, indeed, we made a common man king, thinking that as the crown still existed, someone must be chosen to wear it. But after a while we tired of his boasting and banished him and finally we declared ourselves a republic.

"As you can clearly see, the republic will not be secure until the crown disappears. We watch it night and day, but as yet no change has taken place. So we have to search for pretenders among the heirs and distant kinsmen of

all our dead kings, and to shoot, drown, banish or otherwise make way with such as might cherish a desire to rule over us. It is a fearful task. Our hands are bloody and our hearts heavy. But still the crown, upon its velvet cushion, is as high and as broad as ever it was."

"And you guard it night and day?" a voice cried from the throng.

"Ay," he replied. "It lies in the ancient royal palace with a hundred chosen watchmen pacing the galleries, a picked guard at the doors and a regiment stationed in the surrounding park. These are changed continually so that no plot will have time to make headway. And a pretty penny it costs us, almost as much as the royal family ever did! Indeed it sometimes seems as though we had a king, so much in fear of one do we live. One would say that the crown was our most precious possession."

The stranger laughed grimly and then, replying to a question, said:

"No, it is not even tarnished."

"And you guard it night and day?"

"Ay, we guard it night and day."



DON'T boast that you use your head instead of your hands—woodpeckers do it right along.



The Honour of an Artiste

By Richard Mount

SHE had come off triumphantly, of course. Luigi had been just *too* intolerant. At the trial she had proven him a liar, a loafer, a philanderer with alien women, and in sundry other ways a delinquent husband; and as for his counter-charges—pouf! She could snap her fingers at them.

She was glad the whole matter was settled. For a long time now she had been dissatisfied with Luigi. She had not particularly minded his lying, his loafing, his philandering or his sponge-like proclivities in the general neighborhood of alcohol. But he hadn't been kind. And he had developed a tendency, especially when intoxicated, to refer slightly to the humble station of her sainted parents and to the superior social position of his own lying, loafing and philandering pater. Of course it was true, in a way. Honest and industrious Guiseppi Vaccaro, a reasonably prosperous man, was still the social inferior of the drunken and impecunious Luigi Divivo, Sr. But it was not kind of Luigi to make capital of the fact, especially when he was drunk at her expense.

Nor had it been kind of Luigi, when detected in his philanderings, to excuse himself on the ground that the woman in the case was "such a cute little thing." There was in this an oblique criticism rather painful to her sensitiveness. She did admit a degree of robustness which was but natural to a soprano, but she denied the "fat" which Luigi always imputed to her at such moments. She knew it was mere pique on his part (was not Lionel forever calling her "svelte"?), but it hurt her, just the same. He had even spoken slightly of

Lionel's judgment when she had quoted it to him. He had even pronounced Lionel's fiancée, little Elsie Singer—a charming girl, if perhaps, a trifle plump—"fat," too. For herself, she was loyal to Lionel's judgment. Being an engaged man proved to her that his tribute came from the heart of disinterest.

Luigi's counter-charges had been ridiculous. The Court has shown its sound wisdom by disregarding them.

The blackguard had tried to prove that she had misconducted herself with Lionel. It was unthinkable! They had, of course, traveled together, but was not Lionel her accompanist? And wasn't Luigi quite useless to her, seeing that he was tone deaf? What if they had been locked together in the music room for hours at a time? Did Luigi think that even geniuses could sing without practice? She would be just to her public and practice, if it tore her reputation to shreds.

And what if they had occupied the same suite in Buffalo and Detroit? Did Luigi forget that the treacherous little Marie had quit her cold in Rochester to save her useless lover from the draft? Did he think French maids grew in Buffalo and Detroit? It was positively heroic of Lionel!

And what if he had been attentive to her? Even an engaged man might have been aware, though Luigi was not, of the honour of carrying her—"La Roma's"—bags.

But then it was nothing, nothing. The judge had been a learned man and a just one, and he had properly swept Luigi's charges aside. She had been kind to the judge's wife, of course. She had been charmed with her the mo-

ment she met her. She had liked her so much that, despite the fact that La Roma didn't know what the judge's verdict was going to be, and the verdict was due the next day, she had gone right out to New Rochelle to sing for Mrs. Judge's bridge club. It was cruel of Luigi to suggest that Mrs. Judge's social triumph had anything to do with the verdict.

Well, it was all over. She was through with him at last. He had never been very useful to her. Indeed, she would never have married him if his cousin had not been director at La Scala, and she realized now that she had underestimated her genius. His cousin was not tone deaf, nor did he expect a competent soprano to be a sylph. And since he was a romantic man, she might have—she began to wonder if it were even too late now. After all, a lady constantly traveling from one end of the world to the other needed more protection than an engaged accompanist was able to give her.

However, that was tomorrow's problem. Today, at least, she would give over to thankful contemplation of freedom. It would afford her considerable pleasure to compute in lire the saving in living expenses, now that she did not have to support Luigi's thirst. She had counted on the Eighteenth Amendment, but the result of that has been simply to send the price of liquor up and the quality down. Consequently, Luigi's intoxication cost her more and Luigi, intoxicated, was unkindler than ever.

She reached for the *Times*. It was her intention to look up the state of foreign exchange, but instead she could not get beyond the first page. The press had been just, as well as the judiciary. Didn't the headlines characterize Luigi's charges as false? She felt for the moment so kindly disposed toward the *Times* that she cancelled her opinion of its musical critic, who had at one time compared her unfavorably with Tetrizzini. She could afford to do this. Lionel always spoke so enthusiastically of the *Times* that she

knew all the other papers in the world took their cue from it, except in musical matters. She hoped Luigi had seen the article. He would learn from it, perhaps, how a great artiste is loved by her public.

However, if La Roma had anticipated a day's quiet pleasure, she had not counted upon what the gods had on their knees. There came a familiar rap on the door and then, as if catapulted through it, the breathless Lionel presented himself. The poor boy was in tears!

"Oh, my dear, dear boy! What has Luigi said to you now?" La Roma's sympathies were instantly aroused, for it must be confessed that the sight of Lionel in tears was rather a familiar one, and the cause of them in the past almost monotonously the same. The one thing in the world poor Lionel could never abide had been Luigi's vulgarity. She wondered now how she had stood it herself.

"But—but—" but a gulp choked poor Lionel's progress.

"I know, my dear," said the prima donna soothingly. "Dry your tears; it is all over now."

The phrase was a fatal one. The dear Lionel began to weep harder than ever, inarticulately waving a pink and scented note.

La Roma, however, did not offer to take the note, though from its wild thrusts in her general direction, she might safely have assumed that this was Lionel's intention. Notes and print were hard enough to read; she left handwriting for those who had a taste for it. But, the ardour of Lionel's first demonstration having passed, the use of his voice was shortly to return to him. It did not return to him so quickly, of course, as to be undramatic, nor yet was La Roma's suspense prolonged to the point where it became inartistic.

"Yes, yes," he said, swallowing a sob or two betimes, "it's all over."

"Of course it is," agreed La Roma, complacently.

With the touch of a master, Lionel jarred her out of this complacency.

"I've been turned down!"

"But not by the *Times*."

For just a moment, Lionel was slightly reminiscent of Luigi.

"The *Times*, hell! Elsie!"

"Elsie what?"

"Lionel's tone was a trifle acrid. 'Elsie's turned me down. She has broken our engagement.'"

"But why?" La Roma was incredulous.

"She won't believe me—or us. She believes Luigi."

"The little hussy! Lionel, that girl has a bad mind; you would never be happy with her."

"My happiness is at an end," said Lionel tragically.

The full force of the blow now came home to La Roma. "She has turned you down?"

"Yes, she has turned me down." Lionel spoke as if guarding his satisfaction at having finally made himself understood.

"She doesn't believe us?"

"Yes, that's it—that's it—she doesn't believe us."

"Well, why don't you send her the *Times*? It believes us."

Lionel waved the paper away impatiently. Instead, he drew the pink and scented note from its pink and scented repository.

"Listen!" he said.

He then deciphered the following brief, but pregnant message from the fair Elsie's villain hand:

"I believed in you and that fat vampire—"

"Fat!" shrieked La Roma, but Lionel did not hear her.

"up to the very moment when she began getting so friendly with the judge's wife. Then the first suspicion entered my head that you were guilty, and when she went out to New Rochelle to sing for that old frump's bridge party, I knew the worst. You have broken my heart. I am returning your ring under separate cover. Good-bye forever."

"The little cat!"

"I am a ruined man," sobbed Lionel.

"Everything is for the best, dear Lionel. Her mother's hair was not red."

But Lionel was not consoled. His wrongs increased as he thought of them.

"I can play the piano no more. Even my reputation is gone."

"But not in the *Times*."

"Elsie does not believe us," insisted Lionel.

"But my public reads the *Times*. Whoever heard of Elsie Singer? You should worry."

"But my heart is broken."

"Ah, the heart!" sighed La Roma. "An artist's heart was made to be broken. Now you will play my accompaniments more divinely than ever."

"I suppose you think it is for my own good that you have ruined me. I told you at Buffalo that we would get into trouble."

"Into trouble?" gasped La Roma. "We're out of trouble. Haven't we got rid of Luigi?"

"You have, yes. And now, as you put it, I've got rid of Elsie, too. But the trouble is that while you didn't want Luigi, I did want Elsie. Besides, my reputation—"

La Roma was unaffected. "A girl who would henna her hair is unworthy of you."

Emotion—the emotion of the misunderstood—again got the better of Lionel. "Henna!" he wailed. "What is henna to me now? What will everyone think of me? If she had turned me down because she had fallen in love with a painter and decorator my heart would have still been broken, but my pride would have sustained me. Now, she has not only broken my heart; she has blighted my life. My reputation is gone!"

"Reputation! What is reputation to Elsie? Am I a great artiste to her? I am not! She calls me a fat vampire! I sing divinely and what does it mean to her? Nothing! Absolutely nothing! She misjudges me! She applies her

henna standards to my conduct! Lionel, she has no soul. You are fortunate to be rid of her."

Lionel, however, was determined to be tragic. "Rosa, you look upon a ruined man!"

Rosa ignored him. "Bah! I shall sing 'Der Erl König' tomorrow night at Poughkeepsie and you shall play my accompaniment as you never played before. Your broken heart will be in it. It will be a triumph."

Lionel's gloom was unabated. "Your triumph, yes; but what of *me*? When they see me at the piano, your public will nudge one another and say, 'There is the poor guy La Roma's husband named as correspondent.' I will not, cannot, be a correspondent!"

For the first time it seemed to La Roma that Lionel was a bit tedious. All his talk was about himself. Would he, too, be an unsympathetic husband, like Luigi? She had not thought of it before, but obviously it would bear looking into. After all, she had not seen Luigi's cousin for two years.

A fresh spell of sobbing attacked Lionel, but he fought it down heroically. "You are not kind to me. You are all I have left in the world, and you do not sympathize with me."

"Lionel!" said La Roma reproachfully.

"You don't! And if it hadn't been for you—"

"Lionel!" gasped La Roma. "What are you saying?"

Whatever Lionel's intention, he altered it. He returned to the first motive: "You are not kind to me!"

La Roma spoke sternly. "Don't upset me, Lionel, dear; I have to sing tomorrow night at Poughkeepsie. Have you practiced today?"

"Practiced? How can I practice with my mind in this state?"

"Then you must compose your mind instantly."

Then Lionel rebelled.

"I *cannot*!" he shrieked at her. "What will my mother say?"

"Your mother is a sensible woman. She will tell you that Elsie Singer is not

everything. A girl who hennas her hair—"

For a moment Lionel forgot that she was La Roma, world-famous prima donna, and all he had left in the world.

For a moment he forgot that she was the cantatrice whose caprice had lifted him from the obscurity of a music student in Paris to an international reputation as an accompanist.

For a moment he forgot that but yesterday he had considered it an honour to carry her bags, to be her menial, to stand between her and her drunken husband, a curious world of admirers, autograph fiends and the unsympathetic inconsiderateness of managers.

For a moment he forgot that until the receipt of the pink and scented note in his hand, he had regarded the linking of her name and his, even in the sordid connection of a trial for divorce, as perhaps the most creditable thing that had ever happened to him.

"Go your way!" There was no trace of tears now. "I will play for you no more; not even in Poughkeepsie! Until I met you I was a good boy and Elsie loved me. People who had never heard of me respected me. The name of Atwater was an honored name. Look at me now!" He assumed the attitude of crucifixion. "People who have never seen me hold me in contempt. The whole profession of piano playing is dishonoured! You have ruined me!"

"Lionel!" La Roma was now in tears.

"Yes, cry!" said Lionel bitterly. "It's the least you can do for me."

"Lionel, dear, Elsie has broken your heart. Luigi," she thumped her ample breast vigorously, "has broken mine. Let us forget the past. Let us be unhappy together. Our art will be the greater for our sufferings."

A great patience came into Lionel's voice. "But can't you see, my dear Rosa, that we cannot be together unless we have Luigi's protection? As long as you were married, even to a third-rate husband—well, that was one thing. Now everything is changed."

For a moment there was silence between them. La Roma spoke first:

"Well, what can we do about it?"

Lionel mentioned the minimum.

"You might marry me," he said.

"Marry you?"

"Well, haven't you ruined my reputation? Look at it from my point of view. If we go on together everybody's suspicions will be confirmed."

"Elsie's suspicions!"

"There are more Elsie's in the world than you seem to think."

"But the *Times*—said—"

"The *Times*—Hell!" Lionel said it again. "What does Elsie care for the *Times*? What does anybody care? People will talk about us!"

"All artists are talked about. It is the penalty we pay for greatness."

"I am not that kind of an artist."

There was another silence, then Lionel said finally and sadly:

"I shall wire Kreisler tonight. Maybe he needs an accompanist."

"Kreisler? A fiddler? Have you no soul?"

"My reputation—"

"But Lionel, be reasonable. My concert at Poughkeepsie will be ruined! Haven't I made you what you are?"

"Yes, yes," wailed Lionel, "but I can't go on being what I am. You've brought this on me, and now you won't do anything for me. I'll wire—"

"No! No! Lionel! Not that!" La Roma wavered. "If I marry you, will you be kind to me?"

"Rosa!"

"I'll marry you in Poughkeepsie tomorrow night after the concert."

"Before the concert."

La Roma capitulated. He was a good accompanist, and, besides, she hadn't seen Luigi's cousin for two years.



Solitary

By Clinton Scollard

*THE day some consolation gives
To one who fares alone;
The sun, and all that moves and lives
In some part may atone.*

*But when, with her dark secrecies,
Night from these boons debars,
What melancholy lot is his
Who only walks with stars!*



MOST women have a single standard of morality, viz., that the man is always wrong.



The Elks' Ball

By Ian MacKinnon

I

HE was marvelously groomed, and wore seven horizontal tucks and two turquoise studs in his dress shirt. But when I gave him a light I observed that his finger-nails—what there was of them—were like the ebony crescents on the *de luxe* edition margins of the Koran.

II

A flapper, consuming refreshments and giving ear to the comical remarks of her escort, is smitten with laughter, and exhibits a large, half-masticated mouthful of canned chicken salad.

III

A gentleman achieves the feat of introducing two ladies without a single break in the succulent throb of his chewing-gum.

IV

The decorations are of purple, lavender, pink and white.

V

Two acquaintances of mine seem solicitous to keep their damsels out of my way. I do not know whether they consider me a he-vamp or a hick.

VI

Many of the men seem mortified at being seen with their wives. I don't blame them.

VII

None of the women seem mortified at being seen with their husbands. I don't understand it.

VIII

A he and she flapper, cheeks touching—as well as other sections of their anatomies—find the world good and themselves better, as they glide to the strains of a popular waltz which has on me the same effect as a mild emetic.

IX

An Elk informs me, in a voice of awe, that this afternoon there was not a dress suit to be hired in the city.

X

The elders dance a Virginia Reel with idiotic delight and consequence, the youngsters with ill-concealed fury.

XI

A little, perspiring man asks me if I am an Elk. "No," I reply acidly, "I'm only a jackass so far. I've just put in my application." A mile over his head.

XII

I wonder if those two skinny girls whose eyes devour me admire my erect carriage and debonair red moustache.

XIII

A very charming old police officer tells me that in all his years of social experience he has never seen such an affair. Neither have I.



Mother and Daughter

By John C. Cavendish

I

NOW she was going to see her child again, and after the month of heart-breaking separation she found such a joy, for a moment, in her visions of the approaching reconciliation that all her deep distress was quieted, like the noise of the day in the hour of twilight. A great gentleness prevailed in her mood, a strength to forget, to forgive, that was sacrificial and moving.

She thought that she was strong enough to forget everything, all her plans, her hopes, her expectations, because if she kept any bitterness in her heart it would keep her separated from Hilda. It was more than she could bear to live with the fact of this separation another day.

Before, it used to delight her to look ahead to the future she imagined for Hilda, and so she seldom saw the child as she lived and breathed in the moment, but always through the illusory transfiguration of her hopes. Now she felt that nothing counted save this hour. Hilda, herself, was enough, under any circumstances. She wanted to kiss her, smooth the young, rounded cheeks with her hands, stroke her hair, hold the child's hands in her own. Hilda had never seemed so much an inseparable part of her own flesh, profoundly her own, drawing in the same breath of life.

In an hour they would be together again, and as she dressed to go out she was filled with the thrill of a sweet impatience that stirred her with a mysterious reminiscence of long forgotten emotions. She tried to plumb the vague familiarity of her feelings, and then it

came to her suddenly for an instant only that, many years before, when she had been in love, this same expectancy moved in her senses.

But the past was remote, and what she saw now was her child's face only, and it was natural that the last moment with her Hilda should be the strongest in her memory.

What a glowing face the girl had shown her then! She remembered the flushed cheeks and the wide, excited eyes, but that was because her memory was fortified with her present knowledge. At the time she had been too blind to see anything strange in Hilda's face. What a folly.

She remembered how the girl came to her and said good-night. It was early in the evening, an hour or more before her customary bedtime, but the mother was too unsuspecting for a suspicion, and when Hilda kissed with an almost passionate warmth, and hugged her close, she imagined that the child was trying to find forgiveness, and she responded with her own loving caresses, and held Hilda's carmine-tinted cheeks between her hands as she kissed her.

"You're not hurt by anything that mother said to you this afternoon?" she asked.

Hilda smiled a little and slowly shook her head.

"Dear, you know that I love you and only want to do what is good for you?"

Hilda nodded.

"I know," she whispered.

She did not say anything else, but for a moment pressed her cheek close against her mother's cheek, and the two faces, side by side, similar and dissimilar, were like two pages written

with the same characters, an old one and a new.

Hilda withdrew her arms and stood hesitating a moment at her mother's side, as if there were something she found necessary to say, and was afraid to put her thought into words. The older woman, not observing her hesitation, looked at her and felt, as she had often felt, how young her girl was. The impressive sense of Hilda's youth touched her to compassion, as if something fundamentally pitiful resided like a shadow under the externality of brightness that lay as sunlight in Hilda's golden hair, wide, expectant eyes, pouted lips, transparent, tinted cheeks. Her own memories coloured her mood. Hilda was, in so many ways, a reproduction of herself—and life had not been kind to her.

To save Hilda from the errors of inexperience, from her own errors, from an inherited ardour of temperament, was so much a part of her hourly thought, had been with her for so many years, that it had the force and the urge of a great passion. To deny the girl anything within her power to grant was like the denial of food to one who might come and plead to her humanity with starving eyes, but her determination had already given her the strength of denial. That afternoon she had forbidden Hilda the liberty to see Louis, and the hard recollection of the child's tight lips, pale face, distressed eyes had hurt her again and again that evening, like the merciless repetition of a knife thrust. Now Hilda had come to her and kissed her, and all the harshness was forgotten!

She watched her walk slowly to the door, saw her linger a moment before she pushed aside the dark curtains that hung close to the floor—and then she disappeared into the hall and presently the subdued sound of her movements in the little room at the end of the hall was the only sound that persisted in the quiet of the small apartment.

The mother sat as before, content now, but thinking again of the words she had found necessary to say earlier

in the day, and the events that led up to them.

A small, cheaply ornamental lamp centered on the table at her side illuminated the one half of her face sharply, and left the other half in shadow. The shadowed half, seen by itself, was almost young, for something of its earlier roundness of contour was still retained. It was the light that revealed lines slowly pencilled in by successive years, the droop of the lips, the slightly hollowed cheeks like a mould of wax after the light pressure of a finger, the circled eyes, the bleached colour of the eyes themselves. Her hands lay quietly one over the other, in her lap.

Thinking of the afternoon's event, she was wondering how long Hilda had known young Louis. Afterward, when there was no longer any fear of hurting Hilda she would ask her.

Her discovery of their intimacy had been accidental, and when she saw, watching them together, that they were indeed intimate, it shocked her like a profound deception. Hilda had been silent, Hilda had never said a word, even the name of the boy had never been mentioned, and now Hilda was, in this moment of discovery, smiling up into his face, listening to his words as his lips moved like a devote's in the presence of an oracle.

She discovered the two on the street, late one afternoon. She had just come out of a shop, and then she saw Hilda and the unknown boy standing together on the opposite corner. She did not know how long they had been together that afternoon. Evidently they were now taking leave of each other for the boy stood with his cap removed like an absurd gallant; he twirled it 'round on his finger as he talked to Hilda.

In her surprise she did not think to conceal herself by drawing back under the awning of the shop. She watched them openly; still Hilda did not see her, but smiled and adored the boy, and when he finally parted from her she watched him as he swung up the street before she turned and walked slowly in the opposite way toward her home.

The mother followed her. Her heart was beating painfully. She seemed to find an imminent threat in what she had seen. Hilda's face, the brightened eyes, the rapt expression were fundamentally familiar and understandable. It was the old, disastrous urge to romance that stirred in Hilda now, as it had once stirred in herself.

With a swift recrudescence of memory she recalled the emotions that had moved her many years before; she remembered the vague, sweet longings, the sweet, vague dreams—the wanting to enact romantic scenes, to find herself kissed, to find herself adored. Anyone could have fulfilled her want, and the want was so strong that it kept her illusions living even during the first months of her precipitant marriage, when the pressure of material necessities was already beginning to shadow the illusory happiness of her hours.

Hilda continued straight along the street. She wore no hat and the sun enveloped her cloak-wise. She walked quickly, with a virile elasticity in her step, but in spite of this her mother, following behind, found her frail and terribly young, and the most oppressive fears played in her heart like destructive flames.

Following and watching Hilda she measured the girl's chances by her own, saw her perils in the light of her own experience. How passionately she had wished to save Hilda from the disaster of any romantic folly! She had lived with this wish increasing its strength from year to year, ever since the girl was a tiny child, and her husband had disappeared from her life, leaving her the legacy of an interminable material struggle. Even then her old, strong hopes of happiness were not dead, but transposed; she dreamed of Hilda's happiness.

She saw the girl turn in at the door of their apartment and then she slowed her pace a little, and a quick relief came into her senses with the effect of a soothing drug. It was the relief of finding Hilda safe indoors again that made her question now the complete ration-

ality of her nervous fears. After all, she had seen nothing. A boy and a girl talking together on the street. It was natural; it was insignificant. Hilda would not be so foolish as she had been. She would not attempt the folly of marrying the first unprepared boy that smiled at her.

She went indoors and slowly ascended the stairs to their rooms, and as she opened the door at the top of the stairs a little emotion of pride stimulated her, for she had provided this place after a depressing struggle and she had done more, too, than provide this obvious comfort, for there was a provision for Hilda, something with which to give Hilda her chance when her chance came. The woman smiled. She walked quietly through the hall, and found her daughter sitting by the window in their living room.

She crossed the room to the girl's chair, caressed her and said:

"Dear, what have you been doing this afternoon?"

Hilda answered without hesitation.

"Oh, I saw Cousin Alice, she showed me a new dress that she's going to wear to Helen's party; it is so sweet. White silk with a lovely lace slip, and around the neck there's a border of white spangles that shines almost like diamonds. I tell you, mother, Alice has a real evening dress!"

The older woman frowned a little and she was fearful again, for there was a definite reservation in Hilda's words.

"What else, dear?" she asked quietly.

Hilda looked up at her quickly, then dropped her eyes again.

"What do you mean, mother?"

"I mean, whom else did you see?"

"No one else. . . ."

The mother took her daughter's rounded cheeks in her hands, and tilted up her face so that she could look into it.

"Dear, why don't you be frank with me?"

Into each of the girl's cheeks came an enlarged spot of colour like the reflection of a hidden fire kindled slowly within her blood.

"Mother, what do you mean!" she repeated.

"Hilda! Why do you conceal anything from me?"

The girl's hands tightened together in her lap; her fingers pressed tensely against the backs of her hands, leaving momentary spots of white as she flexed and unflexed them. She lowered her head, she looked down at the floor.

"Hilda!"

She raised her face, but avoided her mother's eyes.

"Do you mean Louis?" she asked. "I haven't done any harm."

"Is his name Louis? I never knew his name before. Why did you conceal the name of one of your friends from me, dear?"

"I don't—know. I—"

"You must know, Hilda."

"Oh, I was afraid. I was afraid you wouldn't like me to know Louis. You are so funny, mother!"

For a moment the older woman was silent, and in that silent moment an impassable separation seemed to exist between the mother and daughter like an unbridled gulf. Hilda's eyes were liquid with the moisture of unshed tears, her radiant hair encompassed her head and touched the corners of her cheeks like a living flame of yellow fire; the aspirations of her illusive youth found expression in her face.

Her mother looked down at her with tired eyes, with drooping lips, with fear in her heart. The physical similarities of the two accentuated their immense difference, a difference of heart, of mind, of dreams—the difference of youth and age.

Then her mother began to speak again.

"No," she said, "it's because I'm afraid for you. Dear Hilda, you seem the same girl that I used to be, when I was a girl as you are now. It has always seemed to me that you could do the same things, and have the same unhappiness. That's been a fear with me since the day that you were born. I want you to have friends, dear, but I want to know your friends and advise

you about them. I was just your age when I met your father and married him. He was too young to have anything and the slow, hard struggle ruined both our lives. Every time I think that you could do the same thing and live through the same unhappiness, it seems as if I myself were living through it again; my heart almost stops beating. Don't you see why I'm afraid?"

Hilda nodded a little, but was silent. The mother looked at her, and Hilda's face was so childlike that suddenly she found herself very foolish and regretted the words she had just said. Little Hilda was only a child, and even if she were romantic her romantic impulses were without serious purpose. It was silly to imagine her in love with anyone—in love, for instance, with the boy called Louis, and supremely silly to imagine her thinking of marriage. She was a child; Hilda was still a little girl.

With a tender impulse she put her hands under the girl's cheeks and pressed her cheek into the masses of her golden hair.

Hilda, responding, circled her mother's neck with upraised arms, and a sincere pity entered her heart like a vague pain. Her mother was old, she thought, and pitiful because she was old, and with this thought and her pity came a sense of her own immense advantage. Her mother was fearful, whilst she was unafraid. Nothing, she thought, was impossible to her. All her wonderful dreams were possible to her. How sweet it would be to tell her mother the secrets of her dreams, but her mother would not understand; she was old.

II

AFTER this talk, the mother was content for a time as if there had been something said between them that assured her. For several weeks it was pleasant to her to think of Hilda in terms of her childlike youth that was in itself divorced from the chance of misfortune or hurt. Her intangible fears

were no longer mobilized into a definite host. The comfort of assurance asserted itself again and her little secret pride in the home she had made and in the preparations for Hilda's future warmed her senses when she was alone. Her past did not trouble her thoughts with distressing portents.

One evening she was alone embroidering Hilda's initials on a little heap of sheer handkerchiefs that was being prepared for a future day. Hilda had gone out to visit her Cousin Alice. In the apartment below a phonograph was playing a dance record. The street, outside, was quiet.

Then, into this quiet and content, a premonition of harm came to Hilda's mother that possessed her without reason, like the unreasoning premonition of an animal in the face of an unseen danger. She dropped the work in her hands, raised her head, looked anxiously about the room. There was nothing in the room; the room was unchanged.

She thought of Hilda, and it came to her that Hilda had been visiting her Cousin Alice on the afternoon when she stood with the boy called Louis, regarding him with upraised, adoring eyes. The woman arose with a sharp intake of her breath. Now she remembered Hilda's eyes as one remembers an impressive spectacle, and a sharp wonder possessed her when she recalled how little account she had really taken of Hilda's expression, how easily she had forgotten. Hilda was in love with Louis; she was certain now that Hilda loved this unknown boy with a romantic extravagance, with a capacity for any romantic folly. This was a certainty she could not reason away, and now that she was certain of it she was tormented like a mind oppressed with a tormenting delusion.

She could not stay in the apartment. She felt that she must go out; if she went out she felt that she might find Hilda somewhere on the street. She emerged from the apartment house with the fixed idea of finding Hilda, as if some divining instinct would lead her

to the spot, in all the breadth of the city, where Hilda was at that moment with the boy called Louis, looking into his eyes with her own eyes of romantic expectation.

It did not come to her that she might go to Alice's home, for she was sure that Hilda was not with her Cousin Alice. She no longer found herself foolish or irrational, but was obsessed with the reality of her own past miseries and the qualities of these miseries coloured Hilda's future now as if Hilda's life were only a reproduction of her own.

She passed through a dozen streets, looking into every face but oblivious to the character of each face when she found the features strange. After a time, she came, without directing her steps, to the street where Alice lived, and paused a moment in front of the house but did not go on. Across from the row of houses was a public square, shadowed with old trees. She crossed to the square and sat down on one of the benches. A bat swooped down from the trees and described the parabolas of its erratic flight close above her head.

There was a strange familiarity in this place and the familiar atmosphere troubled her for a moment with the vague confusion of mind one feels when the odour of a forgotten perfume is scented in an old letter or a long unopened book. Then she was startled to recall her first meeting with the boy whom she had married; they had met in a square like this, one evening in the summer. For an instant it thrilled her to remember their extravagant faiths, their fine disregard for material necessities, their contempt for advice and caution. Then, remembering clearly the after events, she was afraid again and thought of Hilda once more.

A man, strolling, came down the walk and, deceived in the darkness, paused at her bench and murmured "good evening" in an ingratiating voice. She raised her head, the light from a distant arc fell over her lined face, her drooping lips, her startled eyes. The

man stepped back a little with a gesture of half-amused surprise at his mistake.

She arose and walked rapidly down the gravel path—and in a moment she saw Hilda.

She saw her with the shock of one who comes upon a spectacle feared but expected. Hilda was sitting in the deep shadow of a clump of rhododendra; Louis, the boy, was sitting beside her; they were oblivious to everyone save themselves. Louis had his arm about Hilda's shoulder; their cheeks were pressed closely together; they were silent.

Standing behind them now, the older woman watched their immobile folly without the strength to reveal herself, finding herself inadequate to a situation that was almost fateful. She saw a man and a woman pass on the path in front of Hilda and the boy; the man turned, motioned with his head; the woman looked back; they both laughed.

She drew back silently and, walking slowly, started to return home. Her emotions were lethargic, as if her senses were drugged. A sense of inevitability possessed her, against which she could not contend. The only folly she perceived was the folly of her hopes for Hilda, the expectation that she could preserve Hilda from a romantic disaster until the girl was old enough to comprehend some of the necessities of life.

When she came to the apartment house she went to her rooms, and as she sat there in her lethargic mood she heard Hilda come in. The girl called to her; she answered; Hilda said good night.

In the morning they had breakfast together as if nothing had happened in the mother's mind, but as the morning passed, and after luncheon, the older woman found herself aroused from her lethargy. Hilda, with a dust cloth tied about her sunlight hair, was sweeping out their little living room; you could hear her humming a tune at her work. The mother came through the

hall and walked into the living room.

"Hilda!" she said.

Hilda looked up with her eyes a little widened.

"I went to Alice's house last night. You were not there. I saw you afterward in the park."

Hilda rested her hands on the broom, lowered her head an instant and then, raising her face, revealed her cheeks glowing red.

"I can't help it, mother," she said. "I love Louis with all my heart!"

A swift anger flamed up in the mother's senses and she found she must restrain herself from seizing the girl and shaking sense into her romantic thoughts.

"Don't dare to tell me that!" she exclaimed.

Hilda's crimson face was still upraised.

"I have a right to love him!" she said.

"Never say that again, Hilda! You have a right to do only what I say! I never want you to speak another word to him. Do you understand me, Hilda?"

The girl said nothing. She lowered her eyes, dropped her face. Mechanically she began to move the broom back and forth over the carpet.

During the rest of the afternoon the mother and daughter did not speak to each other. Seated in her room the mother felt calmer, more assured. She felt that her fears had been a weakness, that after all she could still command Hilda, and prevent a folly by her commandment. Now and then her anger flared up freshly as she thought of the girl's romantic words.

But whenever her anger returned it always subsided in a peculiar wonder that followed upon it, mixing with and tempering the quality of her resentment. She found herself moved to wonder in the face of Hilda's immensely youthful assurance, her youthfully immense blindness, her certitude of illusory delight. Even the memories of her own youth, and the old conditions of mind of her youth did not destroy her won-

der with understanding, for now, after so many years, she had forgotten a little how to understand.

Meanwhile Hilda sat in the living room with a book in her lap, but she was not reading. She was thinking, with a touch of bitterness, of her mother's blindness, and it came to her that she could never expect her mother's sympathy again. There was a sense of great loss in this conviction that touched her with a sad emotion like the emotion of one who loses an old friend. Her mother was dead to her sympathies, and this turned her thoughts to Louis, and she felt that Louis was never more dear. He was young; he understood.

Later in the afternoon she left the apartment, and when she came back, in time to have dinner with her mother, all her plans were made. Now that her plans were decided a tenderness that she could not repress possessed her. Presently, at the time when she pretended to go to bed she went to her mother and embraced her. It was hard to keep the tears back now, but she hid them, holding her mother close in her arms, and thinking that after a time she would be forgiven.

That night the older woman slept with something of the ease of her old content. When she awakened in the morning she called Hilda, but the girl did not answer. She went to her room, saw with a start of fear the bed undisturbed and seized the sheet of folded paper that lay on the white counterpane like a fateful message.

"By this time I have married Louis," Hilda had written. "I know we will be very happy, and you will be glad in the end. We do not mind being poor, everybody has to be poor some time. I am so confident of Louis, mother, you can't know the faith I have in him!"

It was this confidence, this naïve and illusory faith, the renescent replica of her own past faith, that destroyed all the anger in the mother's heart. She began to cry, and an immeasurable pity flowed with her tears. Poor Hilda! Poor child!

III

IN the month that followed it hurt her every hour that Hilda did not write. She felt that the girl should be receptive, through the unknown distance that separated them, to the forgiveness and anxiety that dominated her emotions. At last the letter arrived and Hilda asked her to come and see her.

"If you have forgiven me," she said.

Now she was going to see her child again, in an hour they would be together again! She dressed and was ready to go, and during the long trip in the trolley car she thought only of their reconciliation and all her old hopes were dead and the moment was accepted like a fatalist accepts the moment.

She came to the street and stepped out of the car. A group of dirty children stared after her, the shrill cries of other children at play filled the air like a counterpoint of high-pitched instruments to the noisy orchestration of the street; women with folded arms, wearing soiled boudoir caps, stood in their doorways and called a loud conversation to each other. She came to the house she was looking for, and was admitted by a fat woman who seemed to be the proprietor of the place. She was directed to go up two flights of stairs and turn to the front rooms.

Here she found Hilda.

Hilda opened the door and they clung to each other, kissing each other with tears in their eyes. Then Hilda took her hand and led her into a meagre room.

"Oh, we are poor, mother," Hilda said, half laughing, "but Louis and I don't care. Sometimes he worries for me, though. But I know he will succeed—look how young we both are!"

She began to tell all the glowing hopes she had with Louis and the mother listened with a great distress in her heart.

"But you must not live here, dear," she said. "Tell Louis to give up this place, and you will both come home with me."

For an instant the girl was silent and then she slowly shook her head.

"Louis is too proud," she said.

Her face was serious, there was just a touch of fear in her voice, as if the pride of Louis was pitched a note too high for her complete response.

"Dear Hilda," her mother said, "you must not be foolish, nor Louis. I know what you are facing. I faced the same thing, dear. I am afraid for you. It is easy now, but little by little the struggle takes away the happiness you have, you forget how to be happy, and the struggle is the only thing that is real. You must believe me, Hilda. Oh, I am afraid for you!"

Hilda still smiled and shook her head. She said nothing. Although she smiled, she was sad again, for she realized once more the separation that stretched, like a distance of earth, between her mother and herself. Her mother was old, she could not understand. She knew nothing about happiness; she could not guess the happiness of loving Louis. Sometimes, she thought, she might have a girl of her own, and when happiness came to *her* girl, she would be different, she would understand.

"We will never forget how to be happy, mother," she said at last.

There was an assurance in her quiet voice that gave the older woman a complete sense of her impotence. She could not make Hilda see. Poor Hilda! Realities were nothing to her, and only illusions were real, the terrible, sure illusions of her abounding youth!

At last it was time for her to go. Hilda promised to bring Louis to see her in the evening. She came with her to the door, and watched her as she disappeared down the flight of narrow stairs. She stood at the top of the stairs after her mother had gone, pitying her because she was old.

On the street the older woman hurried to take the car back to her apartment. She wanted to prepare a present for Hilda when she came that evening. She would give it to her in a sealed envelope, when Hilda was ready to go, and ask her not to open it until she and Louis were back in their rooms. In that way she could avoid Louis' pride.

She would give Hilda the money she had saved for another purpose and another occasion. She had saved it for the extravagant little frocks, the pretty things a girl should have for the dress Hilda would wear on her wedding day, when she married the man her mother planned would finally come to her. Hilda would not buy pretty dresses now, but necessities.

Then she remembered the girl's face, the girl's supreme assurance. In that moment her spirit was too tired to be assured, even to be assured in her own disillusion. The confidence of Hilda's youth oppressed her. Perhaps she was wrong; perhaps, after all, she was old, and fearful, because the years had made her tired. Louis was proud, and she had forgotten how to be proud; surely he loved Hilda—it might be that they would be happy . . . that they would succeed . . .



THE only thing about many a theatrical star that shines is her nose.



Studies in Husbands: Case 14

By Thyra Samter Winslow

I

ESTELLE OGDEN was ashamed because her voice trembled, as it so frequently did, when she returned home too near the dinner hour and had to ask if her husband had returned before her.

Anna, the maid, nodded.

"Yes, Mrs. Ogden. He got in just a few minutes ago. He's in the library."

Estelle wanted to run in and say, carelessly, "Hello, Walter, so you beat me home?" or something else lightly inconsequential. She didn't dare. She knew, no matter what she said, that her husband would have a sarcastic, mocking answer ready for her.

Why had she come in late? It was the first time she hadn't been at home, waiting for Walter, for several weeks. Though, if she hadn't been late, she knew it would have been something else. Walter was always able to pierce her contentment with little pin-pricks—to disturb her peace of mind over nothing at all. It wasn't that he was really cruel, of course, but just that he was a bit satirical over things she felt serious about, ready to scoff at her beliefs, and mock at her generally. Estelle knew she had no sense of humour. She was convinced and humble about it. But it made her quite unhappy to know that, no matter what happened, she would always be, when they were alone, the butt of Walter's jokes, the target for his railleries.

Walter seemed different from others, of course. In public or whenever anyone else was with them, for that matter, he was nice to her. Estelle knew that. Then he was amiable, courteous,

affectionate even. Her women friends envied her. The men she knew, because of Walter, treated her the way Walter did, with pleasant, distant dignity. When they were with people, Walter's attitude was all it ought to be. Estelle felt she should be satisfied.

But, when they were alone, Walter made a monstrous joke of her. He annoyed and teased her and enjoyed himself. He picked to bits the things she had done while he had seemed the attentive husband, satirized her little attempts at gayety or originality or repartée. It seemed to Estelle as if she were tethered to Walter, allowed to get away just a little—when she was not with him or when they were with other people—only to be pulled back, cruelly, when they were alone. She knew that, if she could show Walter that she didn't care, that she didn't take his taunting seriously, he would stop. But she did object to his treatment and she knew she always would and that he knew how she felt.

Walter didn't treat other people the way he treated Estelle. To his equals he showed the same smooth politeness that he showed Estelle when others were with them. To his superiors he added, even, a touch of suavity, of ingratiating homage. He was getting ahead because of this, Estelle knew. To his inferiors, to hat-check boys, to waiters, to taxicab drivers, Walter showed a little of the derision he kept for Estelle. Swift flashes of sarcasm because of poor service, ironic asides, had won for him a reputation as a wit, a clever fellow. Estelle shuddered at these sallies and tried not to meet Wal-

ter's eyes, for she knew he would be laughing at her.

Now, Estelle hurried up to her room, took off her coat and hat, arranged the chiffon at the throat of her afternoon frock and smoothed her simply-arranged, pretty brown hair. In the hall, before going into the library, she paused, a bit frightened over what she knew was coming.

"That you, Estelle?" Walter called.

"Yes, dear."

She went into the library with little quick steps, an attempted gayety, and tried to smile.

"I'm—I'm sorry I—you—got home before me. I had no idea it was so late. Anna said you haven't been waiting long."

"Not long—just a few minutes."

Estelle, surprised at the calm pleasantness of Walter's voice, waited.

"How's your kindergarten?" he then asked.

"Kindergarten? I don't . . ."

Walter smiled as he went on.

"Yes, Anna said you were with the Bradbury girls and Margaret Grant. So I rather thought you had started one. If that isn't a kindergarten, what is? They are at least ten years younger than you, aren't they?"

Estelle wanted to defend herself. She liked being with Martha and Louise Bradbury and Margaret Grant.

"I don't know," she stumbled. "I'm—rather fond of them. We had an awfully nice time—went to the Philbin tea."

"I can picture you," Walter went on, "sailing in with your little covey. If old lady Bradbury didn't look like the hired girl and Thursdays off, the Bradbury girls would probably have taken her with them. Consider how far they've risen outwardly—they don't dare be seen with their own mother. But being smart enough to know that a protecting dowager enhances their youthful charms, they pick you out for the deed. I hate to see my wife being made an easy mark, a free foil for the Bradbury beauties."

"Walter . . . that isn't fair. I like

to be with them. Honestly, I do. Why, I 'phoned them to know if they were going. You know I'm not much older than they are. Martha is twenty-five or so and—if—I am thirty-two, you know I don't look it. We look practically the same age . . . I mean . . ."

"Yes, of course."

Walter addressed, oratorically, an imaginary audience.

"Why is it that every women over thirty imagines that she looks twenty-five and could pass for twenty at a pinch? Why does every woman get to be a fool when it comes to looking her age?"

He turned to Estelle again.

"You know, Estelle, my theory is that every woman looks her real age—or over. This business about going around with women half your age in order to prove to a trusting populace that you are still in your first youth doesn't work. Really it doesn't. The combination may be good for the Bradbury girls or that chattering little Grant, but it isn't advantageous to you, if you must know."

"I—I suppose you're right," agreed Estelle.

The joy and sparkle of the afternoon were gone. The tether had been pulled in. She felt tired and unhappy—and old. She wanted to tell Walter that she liked the Bradbury girls because they were simple and plain and treated her nicely—that she felt happy with them and felt their age even if she didn't look it. She didn't dare. She stood at the library table and turned, nervously, the pages of a magazine.

"What's the matter with dinner?" Walter asked. "You know I've an engagement at nine. I made it late purposely, hoping, without reason, that, by some miracle, dinner—which should be ready at seven and would take half an hour to eat if served quickly—might be through two hours later. What's the matter with the cook, anyhow?"

"I'll see."

Estelle hurried to the kitchen.

"What's the matter with dinner?" she asked, quite gently, of Millie, the cook.

She was always a little timid about giving orders.

"It's all ready, ma'am," Millie said. Millie was afraid of Ogden, too, and spoke with the same apologetic hesitancy that Estelle so frequently used.

"Dinner's been ready since just before seven, but Anna asked Mr. Ogden if he wanted to eat at seven and he said he'd wait for you—that he'd let us know. We've been waiting."

Estelle and Walter had dinner almost in silence. Estelle was quite miserable, unhappier even than usual. She felt she couldn't stand things the way they were much longer. She was becoming more and more afraid of what Walter would say, always hurt by the things he did say. She knew they were mocking, unnecessary. She could not defend herself. Even, after dinner and after Walter had gone out, she felt too restless, too unhappy to read. She thought, instead.

There was nothing she could do, if she left Walter, of course. She had thought that all out. Her parents were dead. She had no money. She could not earn any—not enough to make her comfortable. She could never get a divorce or alimony on the grounds that, when they were alone, her husband said horrid things to her. There was no one else she liked at all—and she had liked Walter a great deal—really loved him—when they were married. She even liked him now, when he didn't say contemptuous things. Her friends? Why, they would think it perfectly ridiculous, if she left Walter. She cared what people thought, too. That was the worst of it.

The women she knew thought she was lucky, that Walter was splendid. When they complained about their husbands—little things, about their being stingy or suspicious or never being at home, or caring for other women—there never was anything Estelle could say. She was too sensitive to say, "Walter says sarcastic things to me when we are alone." She didn't think it fair, anyhow, to live with a man and talk about

him. She let her friends believe she was happy.

Of course, in a way, she *was* happy. She had nice things, a lovely home. She didn't want much, quiet, pleasant things, people to be kind and gentle toward her. And Walter was satirical and bitter. She couldn't keep on standing that. Yet she couldn't leave him. She wouldn't have a position or anything. She'd be terribly lonely, besides. Still, she felt she must leave him. She had to leave him. The tether, his hold on her, was too painful to stand and made her too miserable. She couldn't live with him when his persistent sarcasm made her so unhappy.

II

THE next morning Estelle did not see Walter at breakfast. Sometimes she had breakfast in bed, but this morning, when she came down at Walter's usual time, in a new orchid-colored negligée, she found he had eaten half an hour earlier. In the evening, a full hour before his return, she was at home, waiting for him, dressed in a little gown of soft green, his favourite colour. She would try to be nice, make him pleased with her. She picked up and put down half a dozen books and bit one of her nails so badly that she had to file it off quite too short. At ten minutes after seven the telephone rang. It was Walter to tell her he was going to have dinner with a business acquaintance. His voice, over the telephone, sounded pleasant, gracious:

"I'm so sorry dear, I can't be home. But dinner, you know, has been delayed on several occasions, just a trifle, of course, and I was afraid I couldn't quite make it. I'm going to the theatre with Dalrose and Whipple, who are on from Chicago. I would have preferred dining with you—the pleasure of your charming company—but if dinner had been late I couldn't have made connections, you see. . . . Don't wait up for me. . . ."

Estelle cried a little and then played, rather listlessly, on the piano. She

tried to read, magazines, a book Walter had brought home that he had said was considered awfully good, "but you'd better not tackle it, my dear—a little beyond your depth, I'm afraid." She tried to read it. She could understand all of the words, but they didn't seem to mean much when they were put together. It seemed awfully dull and muddled. She put it aside after the first seventeen pages.

The next evening Estelle was at home, waiting for Walter when he arrived. Dinner started pleasantly enough. Walter was in a peculiarly hilarious mood that frightened Estelle even more than his more serious humour.

"How did the little wife improve each shining hour?" he asked, jovially.

Estelle was sorry she didn't have something useful to report. But she knew she seldom did useful things—she didn't know of any to do. She went to charity things, sometimes, but they never seemed to get anywhere.

"I had an awfully nice afternoon. I went to see Mrs. Lathrup," she said.

Surely that was a safe enough answer. Mrs. Lathrup was a few years older than Estelle and was the mother of three children.

"Fine. And how is the excellent Mrs. Lathrup?" boomed Walter. "In good health, I trust?"

"They're all quite well."

"So-o. That's good. And is the excellent Mrs. Lathrup about to become a mother? She usually is, I believe."

Estelle was shocked. She didn't like maternity to be taken lightly. She had married at nineteen, and, like so many women who marry early and are childless, had a reverence, almost a virginal attitude toward child-bearing.

"I—I think Mrs. Lathrup is going to have a new baby soon," she said.

"Of course she is—of course. . . ." For some reason, Walter burst into giant roars. "Very good. Very good, too! What peculiar friends you have, Estelle—flappers, or women who are permanently about to become mothers. . . ."

There didn't seem to be much to say,

after that. Estelle was unhappy again. She wished she knew what to do. Could she pretend to be ill and ordered away for her health? Anything? She felt dreadfully unhappy—a pet on a chain to be pulled in and laughed at. Yet she knew that Walter would continue to be courteous and attentive to her when they were with other people and that, when they were alone, she would continue to tell him everything that she did and that he would jeer and taunt at the things she told him.

Yet, the very next evening, Estelle did not tell her husband all of the day's activities. It was little enough. But to her it seemed important enough to be memorable.

Estelle went to tea at the Faulkners'. Mrs. Faulkner was always giving not very exclusive parties to not particularly interesting people, but Estelle liked going places and had nothing else to do. She went with Mrs. Richards, who forgot her, in chatting with some acquaintances she hadn't seen in a long time, so Estelle, who wasn't very good with strangers, sat down out of the way, in a not-too-comfortable window-seat.

André Masaccio, quite as eager as Estelle to get out of the crowd, joined her in the window-seat. She had met him a little while before.

Masaccio was a young Italian who was enjoying a small popularity with his portraits. They were not remarkable in any way. They were examples of one of the established "new" schools, done rather blotchily with huge strokes and extravagant in paint and colour rather than in technique. Because Masaccio had an attractive foreign accent and some money, he was invited to a number of semi-smart teas given in the homes of those who were glad enough to give teas and know anyone at all interesting to invite.

Masaccio went to the teas because it was good business and because he preferred women to men. Crowds, though, confused him and he grew nervous when women gushed too much and surrounded him with fountains of repartee. He had rather a slow mind of no

particular brilliance and he liked to be taken seriously and in a more leisurely tempo. He was a handsome fellow of medium height with a black mustache, a nose inclined to be aquiline and soft and rather vacant brown eyes.

Estelle never knew what to say to people, especially if they were at all important. Usually at teas, her meetings with the lions did not progress beyond mere polite murmurings. And here she was, seated next to a new and very good-looking young artist.

Estelle was never, on any occasion, a clever conversationalist. In her extreme youth she had been rather perkily impudent and lively. But going places with Walter and wondering what he would say to her later had taken away most of her gayety.

Whenever she did say a clever thing in a crowd, if Walter overheard it, as soon as they were alone he would tear it to bits and hold it up to ridicule. This had made her extremely self-conscious. Her conversations were nearly all stilted and colourless, quite as if Walter were listening and would use what she had said as material for later burlesquings.

Now, with Masaccio, Estelle did not know what to say. She was not accustomed to talking with strange young men. She smiled at him and managed the usual things about the weather and the house, which had been recently re-decorated with layers of batik draperies. She wondered why Masaccio bothered with her at all and the fact that he was there rather worried her. She wanted to tell him he could go, that she didn't need looking after, that people usually didn't pay much attention to her.

Masaccio, not being clever himself, was delighted to find a woman who could sit quietly and did not need flattery or entertaining. They talked for half an hour, until Estelle grew quite frightened. She mustn't keep this man talking to her any longer! Besides—it was late—time for her to go home. Why did he keep on talking? How did one leave a casual acquaintance?

"I'll have to go," she said finally. "It's

nearly dinner-time. I've a husband—you see—he—he'll expect me."

Masaccio did not seem to think this startling, though it was not what other women said to him.

"May I come to see you?" he asked.

Estelle told him she would be glad to have him come to tea, though she thought it mere politeness of him to ask. When she gave him her address she felt worried, as if she were doing a wrong thing.

At dinner, she did not mention Masaccio. The things Walter said didn't hurt so much. The tether hadn't loosened, but, after all, if it were not drawn taut, there were still pleasant things to do. An artist had talked to her—had asked to call!

III

A WEEK later, Estelle was reading in her room, about four in the afternoon, wondering if it was too early to dress for dinner, and if Walter would be especially unpleasant, when Anna told her that Masaccio was calling. He had come to tea! Estelle did not have tea every day, though she liked to pretend to her friends that she did. She gave Anna special directions about tea things and put on her green frock.

Masaccio was even nicer than she had thought him. She felt quite comfortably at home with him and, when tea came, she served him prettily and found herself smiling with him over half a dozen things. She found, with delight, that he did not expect her to be brilliant, that he was not brilliant himself. Most women would probably have found him extremely dull. He was not well read. Outside of a cultivated patter of flattery, he didn't know a great deal about the things that usually interest women. But he liked to talk about himself, at length and seriously. He liked to talk about life seriously, too, to discuss little things, to dwell on trifles.

Estelle liked to talk that way. To her, Masaccio seemed restful, simple and pleasant. Sometimes, for several minutes at a time, neither of them said

anything at all. Then, in a panic, Estelle would start to talk. She was afraid that Masaccio was dreadfully bored. She did not know just what to say, but didn't want him to be annoyed with her. Walter would have been, had she let conversation drag. She was surprised when, before he left, Masaccio asked her to go with him to an exhibition of pictures the following week.

After that, Estelle saw Masaccio frequently. The time she spent with him seemed unbelievably pleasant and real. She found he was a gentle, shy fellow. He liked talking about his work or listening to Estelle chatter about nothing at all or just to be silent. They had tea together at tea places they considered unique. Estelle met several artists, friends of Masaccio, and enjoyed listening to them, very serious about their work and their rivalries, discussing art exhibits and technique. When she and Masaccio were alone, he treated her with an exquisite gentleness that seemed lovelier than any other treatment she had ever had.

Estelle knew she was doing something very bad, seeing Masaccio so frequently. She told herself she was, but that she didn't care. Here was a man who liked her, who was not unkind. She could be herself, laugh or talk about little things. Even Walter, at breakfast or dinner, did not seem so cruel. She seemed to have built up something that kept him from touching her. Sometimes she could be so busy thinking about Masaccio that she would hardly hear what he said to her. After all, wasn't she right, seeing Masaccio, having little pleasures? Because of Walter's cruelties, didn't she deserve getting away as far as the tether would let her? She felt that life could go on, quite bearably, if she might see Masaccio occasionally.

One afternoon Masaccio remained a little longer than usual. Estelle heard Walter come in the front door and go to his room. She became self-conscious, miserable. She wanted to tell Masaccio that he must leave at once, that her husband had come home. Walter had never

told her not to have callers. It seemed so childish to have to say anything.

Walter came into the living-room. She introduced the men. Walter was urbane, gracious. Masaccio said very little, and left a few minutes later.

"Who is the Wop?" asked Walter, pleasantly after Masaccio had gone.

"He isn't a Wop," defended Estelle, "I told you about him. He's an artist. Very pleasant, I think."

"Oh, yes. Good conversationalist, isn't he?" asked Walter.

"I—I like him. He's very nice."

"You would, I suppose. Why, all the time that fellow was here, all he said was 'yes' and 'no.' A couple of times he put even those in the wrong places. Didn't he say 'yes, sir,' once? I'll bet he used to shine shoes on Third Avenue before he found he could put it over the women by saying he was an artist. I know that type. Honest, did he ever say a complete sentence any time you were with him? I'll give you fifteen cents if you'll tell me one whole thought he's ever said."

"He's very pleasant," Estelle repeated and thought, quite seriously, to see if Masaccio had said a complete sentence to her that she could repeat.

"He isn't sarcastic," she added boldly.

"You bet he's not," roared Walter. "I should say not! It takes more brains than that Wop's got to be sarcastic. I'll bet he never had a real thought about anything in his whole life."

Estelle attempted an indifferent smile and tried to talk about something else. Even being made fun of, on another subject, would be pleasanter.

Coming home from a concert, ten days later, Estelle and Masaccio found Walter waiting. Masaccio, under Walter's calm scrutiny, became as embarrassed as Estelle. Walter, sensing his embarrassment and his unimportance, began ridiculing the young Italian, ever so slightly, as Masaccio grew more and more ill at ease.

After Masaccio had gone, Walter indulged in his usual attempts at irony. He derided the young man's appearance, his sensitive, rather effeminate

face, his accent, his too-long hair. He poked fun at his timid, serious expression, but most of his sarcasm was directed at Masaccio's lack of ease and expression.

"The poor owl!" he laughed. "He opened and closed his mouth as if gulping for breath, probably praying to his gods to send him any word at all. What do you find to talk with him about? If you want to hear the truth, it isn't a great compliment to me, to know that my wife chooses a low-class moron for a companion. If you picked out a clever chap, now . . ."

Estelle tried to keep Masaccio out of Walter's way. But Walter would come home a bit early to dinner and find the artist there, or meet them, occasionally, on the street. And, after each meeting, Walter would grow more sarcastic over the younger man.

"The rabbit—that's a perfect name for him," he said, on one occasion. "Why, his nose seems actually to quiver when you talk to him, and his ears to wiggle. If I frightened him, I'll bet he'd run fast enough. And yet, he isn't all rabbit, either. Did you ever notice, sometimes, he seems to have a sort of puzzled, monkey expression?"

Walter, finding a new way to worry Estelle, took delight in saying things about Masaccio. Estelle was not able to protect herself, as she had done for a while, by not thinking about what he said. Walter's words hurt more and more. Quivering under his remarks, she turned to Masaccio as the perfect friend. She did not have to talk to him nor entertain him. He was quite as simple as she. Being with him was infinitely better than being with the Bradbury girls, for they were a bit conscious of their youth, a trifle superior. Masaccio was humble and gentle and in addition was masculine—an admirer. Too, he was the only person who had ever heard Walter talk sarcastically to Estelle. He, too, had been hurt by Walter's sardonic humour. This, perhaps, was more of a bond than either the artist or Estelle knew. But, because Masaccio did know something of Wal-

ter's nature, Estelle was able to tell him how Walter wounded her, how unhappy she was.

One night Walter came home in quite a rage. He was more than merely pleasantly sarcastic now. Someone had said something—Estelle had been seen too often with Masaccio.

"If you had picked out a decent chap to trail around with I wouldn't have minded," he roared. "But that terrible imbecile, that rabbit with his dull, monkey eyes and his open mouth! It's unbelievable. And people are talking about you, too. Now listen—from now on, never let me hear of your seeing him again! Understand? He's a joke and he's gone far enough. You're like a child. A half-witted artist who can't speak English invites you to free art exhibits and you trot after him and get talked about. I know there isn't any harm in it. There couldn't be any harm in a man that looks like that. He never won a silver loving-cup for saying *one* intelligent thing, did he? But I won't have my wife talked about nor made ridiculous. Understand? Listen, Estelle, tell him the door is closed from now on. He can get his free tea and sandwiches at another lunch counter!"

IV

ESTELLE cried all night. She didn't know what to do. Masaccio meant a great deal to her. The pleasant hours she had spent with him were the nicest things that had happened to her in a long time. She had thought the tether was long enough to allow a little happiness—and Walter had pointed out how short it was. She felt she must break it. She couldn't stand things any more now.

Estelle was to see Masaccio the next day. She didn't tell Walter. She would see him and talk with him once more.

She met Masaccio at an exhibit of modern paintings. They looked at the few indifferent pictures in the small gallery. They sat down on a brightly painted bench and talked about the little printed leaflet and the pictures.

Finally, there was no one near them in the gallery. Then Estelle told Masaccio about Walter. As she told him, she found herself crying. She was ashamed of her tears and sorry, too, that she had chosen such a public place for her news. Her grievances about Walter poured out.

"Our friends all think he is wonderful," she said. "He—he has lots of friends, too—he makes friends easily. Whenever we are alone he is—is cruel, much more biting and taunting than you have seen him. He ridicules everything I do, and everything I believe. I—I can't stand it."

Ten minutes later they were in a taxi, driving toward Central Park. Masaccio had his arms around Estelle and she was promising to run away with him.

He was lonely and shy and so was she. They would go away together. That is, she would leave Walter. They would stay in New York, for Masaccio's patrons all lived in town and he liked New York best. Walter would get a divorce. They could marry. Masaccio had his art and a little money—they could get along.

She promised to meet him the next afternoon at three. She would go home now and pack—she would send her trunks to Masaccio's apartment. They could be happy and quiet and peaceful.

They kissed each other good-by rather timidly. Estelle hurried into the house. They were having company for dinner, the Griers and a just-married couple, the Marches. Estelle just had time to change into a frock more suitable for dinner and to arrange her hair by the time the guests came.

All evening she was so nervous that she could hardly talk, but the dinner seemed well-prepared and well-served. All through the evening Walter was attentive and courteous. She hardly knew what she said or what their guests said. What did it matter? What did it matter, even, how contemptuous Walter would become after their guests had gone? Tomorrow . . .

When the company left, Estelle told Walter she had a headache. She went

to her room and slipped into a nightgown and a negligée. She threw herself across the bed. Her head did ache. She would start to pack things, just little things, so that Walter wouldn't notice, if he came into her room. She'd have her trunk sent in, as soon as he'd gone, in the morning. It seemed impossible that this could happen—was going to happen—that she could break the tether, after all—and get away like this—so nicely—so easily.

Walter knocked.

"Yes?" she called, through the closed door.

"You aren't feeling awfully bad?"

"I'll be all right in the morning."

"Sure?"

"Yes."

"May I come in?"

"I—oh, all right."

He came in and stood over her as she lay on the bed. She sat up.

"If you didn't run around to so many teas in the daytime and fill up on French pastry and chocolates with your little playmates you wouldn't have headaches," he said. And then added:

"By the way, of all things, why did you have roast beef tonight? I didn't intend to say anything because you have a headache—though it's probably your own fault—but I simply can't help mentioning it. When we have guests, of all the meats there are in the world, why does my wife have to pick on either roast beef or roast chicken? Your dinners remind me of Sunday at a boarding house."

Estelle brushed her hair back from her forehead.

"I thought the dinner very good—and that everyone had a nice time," she offered. She was ashamed because she was defending herself.

"I'm sure you did. You have a roast-beef soul," said Walter. Then:

"Did you see the rabbit today?"

"Mr. Masaccio? If that's whom you mean, yes."

"How did you guess? You are a real detective, Estelle. That is just whom I did happen to mean. You are becoming absolutely clever. You deliv-

ered the no-more-free-tea ultimatum?"

"I—I—told him you didn't—care to have me see him."

"It didn't break his tender young heart?"

Estelle wondered what Walter would do if she dared tell him. What would he do—finally—when he found out?

She wanted to say something. She waited. Then:

"He didn't like it, of course, Walter. Walter—what would you do if—if I didn't want to—be told not to see him—if I kept on seeing him . . . if . . ."

"My, my!" Walter's voice took on a tragic tone. "Shall I threaten to throw you out into a cold world? Though it isn't cold this month. Or pose as the enraged husband? Imagine—if you can imagine anything—how our friends would take it, if I told them—why—for instance, if I told them that you and your little rabbit had—eloped. You and the little Wop! Two minds without a single thought—two souls taking tea as one. Wouldn't it make a sweet scandal?"

His voice grew condescending.

"Listen, Estelle, I'm glad you told that fellow to get out. If he had any brains . . . but that's out of the question. But I don't like to think of him hanging around—you don't know men, Estelle. They are dangerous, those half-baked fellows. You can't tell what might happen. . . . And can't you hear people talking? Tell me, now that he's 'passed out of your life,' can you think of a whole thought, a whole sentence, that he's ever said while you knew him? I'll bet not. You see what a boob, what a time-waster he was? It was for your own good. Better go to sleep now. Hope your head is all right in the morning."

Estelle heard the door close. She

threw the negligée across the chair, got into bed, pulled out the light.

She knew, now.

She couldn't leave Walter. That was certain. She didn't love him. She would never feel any differently toward him. She would always be afraid of him and quiver at his remarks. She didn't love Masaccio, either, the way she had once loved Walter. But she liked Masaccio's gentleness and slowness. She liked his frankness and his simplicity. She didn't tremble when she was with him, for fear of ridicule. She hated Walter's mockeries, his disrespect of everything she cared for. Yet she knew she would stay on with him.

She had thought Walter too sarcastic to live with. She had thought that she must break away from him—that she could break away. She knew better, now. She could stand living with Walter. He might hurt her, but it was only when they were alone. In public, he would allow her to keep her self-respect because she was his—a possession. As his wife she would have position, dignity. She was timid, stupid, she needed that. But, if she left him, all of his irony and sarcasm would be turned on her.

She could imagine dozens of things he would say about her and Masaccio. He would make them the butts of a hundred cruel jokes, even as he kept his own dignity. Everyone would laugh at them. She couldn't stand more jeering and mockery. The way things were was terrible enough. But that could go on. The sarcasm she got—she was used to that. But she wasn't brave enough to stand the things that would come to her if she left Walter. The tether was cruel but it was bearable. She knew she was not strong enough to break it.



The Story of Timothy Tutt

By Grace Jackson

THIS is the story of Timothy Tutt. For days he had experienced a general feeling of malaise; a tightening about the scalp, a sense of suffocation. So, being a careful man, he went at once to a doctor.

The doctor examined him carefully, questioned him closely and finally diagnosed his trouble. Mr. Tutt had undoubtedly a very weak heart. The slightest shock would be enough to finish him off. Sadly, but determined to make the best of it, Mr. Tutt started for home.

Little Simeon Tutt had waited an hour or more for his father's return

from his office. He could not understand the unusual delay, as Mr. Tutt had not told the Tutt family of his intended visit to a physician. At length, Simeon Tutt had, what was for him, a brilliant idea. He would hide in the dark vestibule and surprise his father.

Pondering over the physician's words, Timothy Tutt wearily ascended the steps of the Tutt domicile. It was very dark. As he inserted his latch-key in the lock a dark shape hurtled itself at him through space and a hideous noise assailed his ears.

This is the story of Timothy Tutt.
This is the end of the story.



Time Is

By John McClure

TIME is—Time was:
What moved between
Were Chinese shadows
On a shifting screen.



WE love best those who think more of our possibilities than of our achievements.



A Nickel's Worth of Greatness

By Stanley Dell

IT is not every man who can be a St. Francis or a Cesare Borgia. This was a platitude of Brander Milrow's. He had said it, he had lived it, but he had never thought about it.

His life had flowed without crisis or climax through school, college and a desultory decade till he came to thirty-five. Then he joined the Urbs Mundi. It is, as everyone knows, the most solid of New York clubs. Its members are out of reach of the coarser pranks of destiny, and they dread a drought in their cellars as little as the common man dreads the coming Glacial Period. Moreover he had a bank account compared to which his gambling could hardly be called desperate. In affairs with women he tired first. His temptations had ever been such that he could promptly yield to them. And he had always believed that he was made for that kind of existence.

Now suddenly life offered him the choice between a crime and a sacrifice! Of smashing a man's career or effacing himself. One way or the other, of being heroic—he, Brander Milrow! Ah, really! To have asked nothing of life except to be happy, and then to have it take one by the throat like that: "Be a Saint or a Sinner."

Yesterday he was still at his ease at his club where life's annoyances were not admitted by the doorman. He could keep off unhappiness as a man puts off a summons, by remaining in his arm-chair. Instead he had gone to Alice's. He had found her with Barton at the top of the stairs leading up from her American basement. And she had sent him down again. Tonight Tom Barton's name was to be offered at the club,

and he, Brander Milrow, would smash him or resign. For with Barton in the club the drowsy peace of its deep chairs would be turned to torture.

At the accustomed hour on this catastrophic April mid-afternoon, habit drew Brander Milrow toward the Urbs Mundi. Jauntily dressed, yet on foot, he was climbing Murray Hill from the south. This was not in itself strange. His bachelor apartments looked on Gramercy Park, and he had gone on foot for exercise daily, weather permitting, ever since he had read in Sacha Guitry that a stout man can never hope to launch a style.

And then he had always enjoyed Murray Hill. He liked the way Park Avenue rose on the back of Fourth, trampling under foot the sordid street cars, forming an airy island of respectable wealth above the flood of gross affairs. He was fond of the prosperous but ugly houses. Built in the wrong style and the wrong place, they were losing their fight against time with a show of gallant good form. They kept the pretense of a spaciousness they had lost—some with a tulip bed, some with a maple tree. Even the Grand Central Station to the North was a triumph for the sacred hill. It was a late invasion of commerce, frustrated on the lower slopes.

But Brander took no pleasure in any of this today. Under the stress of his fever of mind he even lost breath on the slight ascent; and worse, he walked with an uneven gait, like those underbred pedestrians who leave one to suppose that they are struggling with their thoughts.

For he had visualized a scene: a table sparkling with wines, glistening with

the shirt-fronts of club members. At the President's right was set a silver globe with *Urbs Mundi* engraved across it. One by one the members rose and dropped in it a little ball, white or black, for Barton was being voted on. Three black ones would bar him for his politics or morals were it not for the fact that he had just the right amount of each. But now Brander Milrow had taken a table knife and split in two the black ball that was his to dispose of, and before he had dropped the halves into the silver globe a silence fell over the table. The voting had stopped. The candidate's sponsor withdrew the name with apologies to the Club. Barton was ruined!

This was unwritten law. The solemn act was covered by the pledge of a gentleman's honour. The casting of the half blacks meant that Barton had defaulted his losses at cards—that he owed a debt of honour to the man who made the cast.

The realism of this scene brought Brander very nearly to a complete stop. Now, hurrying his pace, he thrust a finger into his stand-up collar, choked and gasped for breath. Barton owed him nothing. Still, one could do that—no questions asked! One could put a half drop of deadly bitters into the cup of a man's life—if one were a Cesare Borgia!

No, no, he had nothing against Barton—Barton with his build of Apollo. That thickly-muscled Mercury over the Grand Central clock also had the build of—of Mercury, of course—but of Apollo, so to speak. Put him into clothes and he would seem to be trying to burst them, like Barton. Whereas Brander had kept the leanness essential to style.

Brander could tolerate Barton—Barton was only a cad. When Brander had come upon him with Alice last night, Brander had asked her: "I fear you are engaged this evening?" Alice had turned to Barton with a treacherous "Am I?" and Barton had replied "Certainly!"

Well, yes, he was a cad! But why

had Alice not excused herself to Brander? Why turn him over to Barton for a verbal kick? Alice had betrayed him. What Brander could never bear would be Alice's treachery flaunted at him out of Barton's eyes, across the window embrasure, from an arm-chair facing him, every day—all the afternoon.

Better slip away; that look, in any case, would ruin his peace. Resign from the club. Give up the pleasure of hearing the taxi-drivers repeat: "Herbs Monday?" How inelegant to call that a pleasure; it was one! Give up the cocktails that the steward made—London Gin, French Vermuth, Martini—Rossi, with a dash of Angostura bitters. Brander had nothing at home—nothing. And then his afternoons. Good God, what would he do with his afternoons?

Still, with him out of the way, Barton would come into the distinction that had once been Brander's. There was no doubt of Barton's election. And it would be better for Alice, if she must give the man entrance, that Barton should be a someone. Yes, Brander would step aside! This indeed would be tossing away showy treasures for one of hidden price. One could do it! St. Francis of Assisi could do it!

A light sweat broke out on Brander's forehead and he slipped a finger under the brim of his derby—a thing that he never did. He dropped his hand at the sight of a passing woman and straightened the gardenia in his buttonhole. Long habit called for this—as also for his glance at the pretty calf revealed by the fashionable skirt. But a sight that had never failed to gladden his day only wounded him now with the remembrance of Alice. Why pretend that he had no score to settle with Barton? The fellow was changing the course of his life!

On Forty-first Street Brander turned west, loitering now like a push-cart vendor. Almost he could have cried his torment aloud, as a huckster his wares along MacDougal Alley. The roar of a coal-chute soothed his brain by drowning the throb in his own head. When

the coal had ceased he saw how hideous it would be to struggle with his own thoughts till dinner time in the quiet of the club-room, in the faintly disturbed silence of newspapers and tobacco smoke. He had reached Madison Avenue.

He must decide now, at once! To smash that fellow Barton or efface himself! Could a man make a decision like that? There were some who could! Was he such a man? But here the instincts of the card table came to his aid.

"Never mind," he told himself aloud, "what kind of a man you are? Decide like a gentleman! Pledge yourself, then toss!"

In his pocket he closed his hand on a five-cent piece and muttered: "Heads, to ruin Barton—tails, to spoil my life."

II

As he walked, Brander had hooked his cane on his left arm, and now looked ahead for a clearing on the sidewalk. His heart swelled. He was about to cleave his fate from the Tomlinsons for whom there is neither a Hell nor a Heaven. He took a few strides, then spun the coin. And collided with a man in a brown derby.

It was a benevolent, middle-aged gentleman who exclaimed: "My dear sir, I apologize! My spectacles had slipped at the moment, and you, I thought—"

His glasses being adjusted, he read on Brander's face the signs of convulsive emotion.

"Not really!" the elderly gentleman cried. "I knocked something! I thought I caught a glitter! Can I ever—but I think—"

And before Brander had mastered himself the kindly gentleman was down on all fours on the curb. Just here it harboured a drain. The gentleman applied his eye to the drain, then thrust in an arm, crying:

"I thought so! What a coincidence, my dear sir! You should have it made smaller."

"What?" Brander gasped.

"Your ring," puffed the gentleman. "Just a moment now—"

His arm was very short, and in the effort to stretch it, his derby rolled off and his coat-tails fell back over his bald head.

"What's he after?" someone asked.

And Brander, aware that passers-by were beginning to stop, could only plead with ambiguous desperation:

"Leave it! Please leave it! I can spare it, I assure you."

"No, no," the gentleman wheezed, "One more effort."

He craned his neck and bestowed on Brander a smile of benefaction. He looked, indeed, like a gracious Diogenes just backing out of a barrel miraculously small.

At this point an old lady in a bonnet interposed: "You're very imprudent; you'll catch germs in there!"

But the gentleman cried: "I've got it at last!"

The one more effort had caused a starched dickey to burst from his vest and to hang down like a horse's chest warmer. A look of perplexity crossed his face and he did not withdraw his arm. The thought of such devotion bringing up a mere nickel made Brander perspire.

The pause, however, grew longer. At last the gentleman judicially explained:

"The trouble is, you see, that I am wearing detachable cuffs. The one on my right wrist has got turned across the drain. My arm is caught."

"Cut it off," growled a newsboy arrived on the scene.

"But unfortunately," declared the confiding gentleman, "I can't reach my cuff."

"Yer arm, then," suggested the newsboy.

"How did it happen?" several people were asking breathlessly.

"The old party skidded," declared a loitering chauffeur, "and dropped his front wheel in the sewer, get it?"

"Leave him 'lone," advised a dough-boy. "He's trying to crawl into his dug-out, that's all."

The public had, so far, paid no attention to Brander's silent rôle in this drama of action. This, at least, was a consolation. To do him justice, he was not thinking of his nickel and the mortification latent in it.

"Would it help if I pulled a little?" he inquired. "That is, if it won't hurt too much?"

A little girl with a shrill voice demanded.

"Hurt who?"

And as Brander tugged at the shoulders of the unfortunate gentleman, someone standing above him lectured the crowd:

"Can't ye see? The guy in the brown rig is wallerin' to catch a holt of the sporty guy's little dawg."

Just then Brander staggered, as all of a sudden the imprisoned arm jerked loose. The gentleman's fist was swollen and cuffless; it was tightly clenched. But it held neither hide nor hair of a dog and the crowd broke out in howls of:

"Ay, ye let him go!"

Even more disparaging was the silent stare with which it watched the winded gentleman in brown take Brander's arm and lead him away. But it did not follow them; and this was because some street urchins were whistling down the drain and luring the mythical dog with scraps of dirty paper.

"Here! hey! Here's a bolony fer ye! Gwan, stick yer head out, I wanter kiss it!"

Meanwhile, Brander accompanied the gentleman who walked very fast, clenching a handful of mud in which was imbedded something round and flat. He had only one hand with which to arrange his clothes, and this hand held his derby. He had not yet the composure to put it on. He was explaining the cause of his haste:

"You can't tell about a crowd—snatch thieves, you know—grab a thing and run, and then with a diamond ring—heirloom? I read your expression—just a minute now—"

They were on Forty-first Street, approaching Fifth Avenue. Brander in-

terjected in his companion's breathless pauses:

"My dear sir—I will never be able to explain—such a thing never happened to a man—to have allowed you—you'll think me cheap—"

"No, no!" his companion protested. "Don't think such a thing! Here, it's quiet here!"

They stopped. The gentleman, with an intent expression, combed out the mud in his hand, and found—the nickel!

"You do despise me," groaned Brander. "You see!"

"I see a lost five-cent piece," the gentleman replied with equanimity and looked into Brander's face. "Yours?" he exclaimed with sudden understanding. "It was this I knocked out of your hand! Well, well, and the look you had! But value is relative after all, isn't it? When one is stranded in the city with only the requisite car fare, a nickel assumes an inordinate worth. Would you permit me to lend you enough for a taxi?"

"No, I beg of you," protested Brander, on the rack of too much kindness. "I'll take my five cents only—thanks! I must go—you will excuse me. I am far too much obliged already!"

As if every second would see him deeper in debt, he wrung the gentleman's muddy hand and hurried away. He was going in a direction opposite to the club. In half a block he noticed this, and stopped.

And now, where was he? Just where he was before—holding in his hand the nickel that was to have changed his fate. Should he spin again? But if a second time, why not a third—a fourth? Why, no; he had spun a coin between good and evil and it had landed in the drain. Did that make sense? Was he to blame for such an outcome of his wager with the gods? Then had followed a ridiculous scene—a most upsetting situation. At last the elderly gentleman had returned him the piece of money and—Great Heavens! He had forgotten to look if it were heads or tails!

What a shameful abandonment of his resolves! He must find the gentleman and ask him—

Brander turned and ran toward Fifth Avenue, a little heavy-footed—as though he were taking up a burden he had dropped—but yet with determination. There is no crossing at Forty-first Street in front of the Library; at the corner he turned north. At Forty-second Street he caught sight of a brown derby on the west pavement. He started to dash across, but the traffic turned and a very superior policeman seized his arm. As he tried to wriggle away this officer coldly reproved him:

"Come, I can't allow that, Mister! You must wait with the others."

"I've got to cross," cried Brander. "There's a gentleman over there who—"

"I'm not arguing," the policeman declared urbanely, and pushed Brander back to the curb where a throng was restlessly waiting for the green light to come on.

"If I don't catch him," gasped Brander, still struggling, "why, damn-it-all, I—"

"Mister," pronounced the officer, "kindly remain a gentleman!"

At these words, the knees of Brander Milrow turned to water. Had he been about to cease to be a gentleman? He felt of his hat; it had a rakish slant. He looked at his cuff; his handshake with the elderly gentleman had adorned it with a smudge. His gardenia was a horror with its one bruised and yellowing petal. And his spats were a sight. What if Alice should pass in her limousine, or Barton come up behind him on the curb!

When the green signal had flashed, Brander was the last of the throng to gain the other pavement. He was still dazed by the discovery of the state he

was in; nor was the brown derby to be seen anywhere. Conscious of his appearance, but with a dawning hope, he turned south and came to the steps of the Public Library. A lion looked down on him with a granite sneer. It made him uneasy.

And suddenly in a shadowy angle of the statue's base he saw the elderly gentleman arranging his dickey.

Brander's heart nearly burst. The gentleman was busy, and Brander made a move as if to sneak away. But he summoned his courage to see this thing through. Come! He had pledged himself. Drawing near he stammered:

"I must know—I meant to ask you, sir—as you opened your hand, was it heads or tails?"

At this the kindly gentleman, who had given him a look of greeting, drew off gloomily as he replied:

"Why, it was—no, I don't remember. I haven't the superstition to notice such things. Excuse me, I mustn't stop. And are you sure it really matters?"

Brander was left to realize the immensity of his relief.

Did it really matter? That he was never to know what he had almost done—ruined Barton or destroyed his comfort? No! It only mattered that he would never now be able to decide to do either. And since the policeman had spoken, Brander understood the full hideousness of ceasing to be himself.

Alice—he would have tired of Alice. Barton—it would be a pleasure to take bridge winnings from Barton in Urbs Mundi.

The lion looked at Brander with the granite sneer that said:

"Never lose the courage of your platitudes!"

"Well, yes, it is not every man who can be a St. Francis or a Cesare Borgia.



The Artist Labours...

By John Gunther

THE poet lifted his pen from the paper, and leaned back in triumph. Well, it was done: the poem on death which would cap his fame and prove forever his strange and misanthropic genius. Ah, how this poem would enrage the milk-fed critics! How it would revolt the right-thinking public! How its terrible irony would sear the minds of all who hoped in Heaven! Even the complexity of style he took pride in could not dim the message.

A week after the poem was published the poet received a letter from a lady in Sioux City, Iowa. "Dear Master," it read, "My husband died recently, and I cannot refrain from writing to tell you how your 'On Death' consoled me, and how it has renewed my faith in the life everlasting. . . ."



Five O'clock

By A. Newberry Choyce

DEAR! those intimate magic silences
At end of day that come, and we two share;
When the sun folds his shining draperies
And night shakes out her veils about your chair.

That rare infinite quietude and calm . . .
Those fragrant cups rimmed round with golden bands . . .
And over them weaving the ancient charm
The twain wan butterflies of your sweet hands!



The Twilight of a God

By L. M. Hussey

I

GENERAL GORRION left La Guayra early in the morning, and four hours in a *balandra*, sailing through a rough stretch of the Caribbean, brought him to La Sabana, where he found his son in wait for him. As they drew into the little bay at La Sabana he saw the thatched roofs of the village with eyes that caressed the scene, for he was tired and somewhat ill from the incessant pitching of the *balandra*, and La Sabana, built on the firm earth, was suddenly gracious in his eyes.

They tied the *balandra* at the slip and then, looking off toward the village, General Gorrior saw Julian coming down the path to meet him. The boy was clothed completely in white linen, his tanned face showed as a dark blur above his white coat. He walked in long, slow strides, and since his stature was slight, the long steps gave to his progress down the slope an undulatory motion, like the rhythmic rise and fall of a slow wave.

An immense, brigandish native, barefooted, dressed in loose yellow trousers and a dirty blouse, slouched at Julian's heels, following behind him like a disreputable man-at-arms.

The father and son embraced, and then General Gorrior looked closely at Julian, with a touch of perplexity in his scrutiny. For a moment neither said a word. They stood close together, face to face. The boy, much smaller than his father, bore him little resemblance. General Gorrior gave an impression of simple ferocity, overlaid with a more recent air of easy living and genial ways. His large, square

head was screwed down tightly on his broad shoulders, his large, jetty eyes were widely separated, his nose was an immense divisional ridge in the center of his broad face, his black moustaches concealed both corners of his expansive mouth.

The boy, much slighter in build, had a narrow face, wanting in the older man's simple strength, but not without a strength of its own. Julian's expression was much less easy to read, his character divulged itself less readily. His eyes were drooping, always tired; his gaze, however, was swift and shifting, his lips perpetually smiled a little, without any suggestion of mirth.

Julian saw the expression of perplexity in his father's face and his habitual smile expanded ironically.

"Ah, Father!" he exclaimed, "you hardly expected to find me here, or scarcely knew what you'd find, isn't that the fact? However, you see that the village is still here, and after a bit I'll show you more surprises—two thousand cocoanut palms that I've set out in the last three months!"

The brigandish native stood off a few yards and listened to the conversation of the *caballeros* with a gaping expression, an open hang of the mouth that revealed at once his mental deficiency. He was half idiotic, he had the idiot's slouch, his huge hands hung down nearly to his knees like an ape's. Julian, interrupting an expostulation from his father, turned on the fellow swiftly, and pointed toward the *balandra*.

"Hey, Donkey!" he cried, "Move! Jump!"

Felipe did not understand; he began to grin apprehensively. In two quick paces Julian was at his side, and seizing one of his huge hands, the boy pressed back upon a yielding thumb until Felipe's grin turned downward with pain.

"Down to the *balandra*," growled Julian. "Bring up the Señor's things."

Felipe understood now, and moved off in haste, whilst Julian turned again to his father, his countenance cleared once more of the swift expression of ferocious cruelty that had animated it like the momentary eruption of an inner fire.

He began to ask his father about the trip from La Guayra and whilst he answered the questions perfunctorily the older man glanced sideways at his son's face, occupied with an old enigma.

Now they were walking up the slope together, toward the village.

He did not understand Julian, and to a degree he was uncomfortable in Julian's presence. He found the boy incredibly hard, amazingly self-possessed. Julian had never been otherwise; as a small child he was characterized by an indifference to any soft or sentimental appeal and by a great air of self-sufficiency, as if he had been born into the world with a secret knowledge of his own fate, an occult assurance of his destiny that relieved him of all the weak uncertainties and doubts of self that distress certain of the hours of ordinary men.

There was more to puzzle him now, however, than the old enigma of his son's character. They had entered the village and while the spectacle of the thatched roofs, goats and donkeys tied before the huts, pigs squealing and rushing about distressfully like the enchanted swine of Circe, and slovenly half-breed women pounding up hominy, was fundamentally familiar, there was a surface change that astonished him, attributable only to Julian's administration. La Sabana was, indeed, measurably cleaner than he had ever seen it, and, more remarkable, there were no male natives lounging about the

huts, only their women were visible. The men were all at work.

They passed through the village and entered at once into one of the palm groves. Distantly, through the ranks of the upstanding palms, you could see the white walls of the *hacienda*, glittering like white fire in the noonday sunlight. General Gorrion looked aloft at the palms. A group of natives were at work upon them; they climbed the lofty trunks with their woven belts and steel spurs, and high in the branches they hacked away the dead limbs with broad-bladed machetes. It was an astonishing spectacle. He had never seen so many of the natives at work before, and certainly the palms had never been in better condition, or supported larger clusters of fruit.

They came upon the *hacienda* suddenly; it stood up almost bleak in the sunlight, terraced a little, square walled and dazzlingly white. Once indoors one found it more inviting, for the heat was shut outside the immense stone walls, the *corredor* was huge and cool, and through a door the patio was revealed with its fountain casting up ephemeral, chromatic jewels of water and sunlight.

General Gorrion sat down in one of the roomy wicker chairs and Julian stood in front of him, smiling. Before either spoke again Felipe, the half-wit, came in and regarded Julian with his apprehensive grin, a gargantuan bear in the presence of a small and ferocious trainer. Julian gestured abruptly with a dismissing jerk of his head, and Felipe shuffled out of the *corredor* to wait in the patio upon his master's summons.

"I don't remember that fellow," said General Gorrion. "Where did you get him?"

"He never lived in the village," the boy answered. "I found him in one of the huts along the San Pedro. He serves my purposes excellently. He's very strong and if you twist his thumbs and horsewhip him occasionally, he's tractable and obedient, too."

"Probably you had an interesting experience taming him?"

Julian smiled and nodded, but did not disclose the narrative of this experience, and after a moment his father said:

"You've done very well here, *mijito*. In fact, when I sent you down here, I expected you to burn down the village in a week or two. On the contrary you seem to have organized the whole plantation."

"You misjudged my character, Señor General."

General Gorrión nodded and frowned and stared up at his son as if in an effort to elucidate his mysterious heart by the penetration of an earnest scrutiny.

"Perhaps you are right, *mijito*. I had begun to doubt that you had any character, that is to say, any character different from that of an irresponsible and half-mad puppy. You know my opinion of your life in Caracas. Your companions were worse than reprehensible, your acts were fabulously disgraceful. As for your debts, I haven't finished paying them yet. For example, only last week I went to collect my rents in the Esquina de Pela el Ojo and then I learned that you had been good enough to collect all the rents for me six months ago, and for six months in advance. Of course, it didn't occur to you to mention the matter to me. Aside from the loss of the money, I was very much astonished that you had found means to force those brigands into paying you so long ahead of the due time."

Julian's ironic grin widened; he slowly nodded his head. He seemed to regard the recitation of his past infamies as an appreciation, as a tribute, as an eulogy of his peculiar virtues.

"I remember," he said. "After a fashion, it wasn't so easy. However, I screwed their thumbs! I galvanized their carcasses with the fear of the devil!"

"Of yourself?"

Julian laughed. Gradually the General lost his scowl. Now that the adamant Julian had brought about an astonish-

ingly efficient administration of his plantation, a touch of admiration for the boy's hardness came into his senses, and a vague wonder. Where was Julian's youth, where was his youth's persuasiveness, his youth's accessibility? Julian had never been young, but was born into the world with centuries of ironic indifference!

Later, when Felipe saddled their horses and they toured the plantation, the miracle of Julian's rule became more apparent. By the mysterious force of his cruelty and courage he had driven the natives from the languor of their sun-scorched thatches, cleaned the old groves, planted several thousand new trees, and established, in brief, the promise of a profitable enterprise.

The exact means by which he had achieved this end remained obscure. Obviously the natives were immensely afraid of him. He had come among them alone, without obvious protection, relying solely upon a profundity of self-assurance that confounded their simplicity like something unearthly. He had contrived to stir them with an obscure sense of supernatural fear, as if, in his apparent weakness and isolation, he relied upon darker forces to support the flats of his will. When questioned, he said that the horsewhip was a good medicine, and, he added, there were other ways.

It was plain to General Gorrión that Julian, exiled to the plantation, had found at last a useful scope for his impulses. The boy, he thought, was fundamentally tyrannous. This was the secret of his willingness to remain at La Sabana. The natives suffered a little, no doubt, but the plantation flourished marvelously. Sent here like a convicted man to the steppes, Julian had accomplished an ironic redemption.

At the end of the week the General reshipped in the *balandra* for La Guayra. The sea was smooth, it was level and slaty blue, and the *balandra* moved across the surface of an impenetrable depth like a water-spider that scarcely touches the water. General Gorrión looked back at the black rocks

jutting up along the shore, and at the mysterious squat figure of Julian watching him out to sea. Behind lurked the monstrous bulk of Felipe, whose apprehensive grin was lost in the ever widening space of silent waters.

II

FELIPE had hazy notions of ownership. Before he ever saw the young devil Julian he had known something of General Gorrión, seen him once or twice during his occasional visits when the plantation was still in the hands of a hired *administrador*. General Gorrión, Felipe observed, was a *caballero*, and Felipe admired his enormous moustaches and secretly considered how he might grow such a pair for himself.

Beyond this he had little curiosity about the *caballero*. It never occurred to him, shuffling about on the packed clay floor of his disreputable hut, that the owner of the moustaches was, to a great degree, the owner of himself. That is to say, he did not recognize the square clay walls within which he laid his animal bulk at night as the *caballero's* property, and had he been made to perceive this his imagination would have performed its utmost. The slow waters of the San Pedro, the groves of lofty cocoanut palms, the white *hacienda* lifting up its roof of gorgeous tiles to the unending sunlight, were fundamental and accepted, like the sun itself, and the free air he breathed, and the screaming parrots that cleft the air with green and golden fires.

These things were the facts of life, and he could not separate them into arbitrary acknowledgments of ownership. It was not, therefore, a simple sense of loyalty to a possessor that made him attend upon the young *caballero*, the old *caballero's* son, like an ancient slave serving the interests of an absolute master, but an urge to obey that grew out of a secret terror within his obscure soul.

His servitude began unexpectedly, late on a certain afternoon. At that time he was lying outside his hut look-

ing down into the black waters of the San Pedro and wondering, with a slow perplexity, whence all the water came that drifted by, day after day, with this incessant languor. A few yards beyond, outside a second hut, a woman was milking a skinny goat, whilst a small child, squirming at her feet, bawled with a great and unceasing noise.

Felipe had never seen the young *caballero* before, but he saw him now, riding down toward the river on a very large white horse. Julian's small body was diminished in its effect by the hugeness of the beast he rode. There was something in this spectacle that destroyed Felipe's feeble restraint, and he began to laugh. His great mouth dropped open like the maw of a fish, his laughter tumbled out of this cavernous opening in loud spasms.

Beyond, outside the adjoining hut, the baby was arrested in his lamentations. Felipe's laughter mingled with the overhead screams of combative birds.

The young *caballero* wheeled his immense horse and saw Felipe sprawling in his bestial laughter on the damp earth. He rode up at once and looked down at him.

"Eh, *perro!*" he exclaimed. "What is your carcass doing here? What are you bellowing about?"

Felipe was not offended, but doubly amused. The young *caballero* was almost too small for belief. He did not stand higher than a small cane-stalk. Felipe had never seen a smaller man. When it rained heavily he would be overturned and beaten down by the raindrops. This droll thought convulsed him, and he pressed his huge hands tight against his belly to hold back the pain of his cachinnous spasm.

He was not looking up into Julian's face, otherwise a premonition of danger might have stirred him. Instead, unable to endure the ludicrous spectacle any further, he turned over on his stomach and pressed his face into the moist earth. Julian leapt down and with a swift, vicious thrust drove his shoe into Felipe's convulsive body.

The fellow turned over at once and

sat up. His slow mind could not credit the source of the blow. He turned his head from side to side, in dumb searching. Then Julian, swinging his open hand, struck his broad, flat cheek with a stinging impact.

Felipe struggled to his feet. He towered up, even with his droop and slouch, above Julian like the representative of a species created on a grander scale. His mind was charged with a great astonishment. Before he moved, Julian seized one of the pendant ape-like hands. He pressed down upon the thumb, he pushed the thumb downward toward the wrist, and an exquisite pain tortured Felipe and in his pain he became aware of a flush of intense fear. It ran through his slow veins like a quicker blood; it made him tremble like the strange ghost noises of the river in the night. The young *caballero*, he thought, was more than a man and relied upon a devilish strength that no one could combat. His size was a diabolical deception. Suddenly Felipe began to tremble.

Julian kicked him a dozen times, but he did not move, he only trembled with a gaping mouth.

When he was ordered to follow behind the white horse he stumbled along like a dog, shivering now and then as they made their way through the badly-tended cocoanut groves.

He was profoundly afraid. He glanced up at the diminutive figure on the immense horse and wondered what malign powers gave to him his courage, his strength and fearlessness. The small figure expanded in his frightened eyes, not in its physical dimensions, but in respect to its psychic affect. He saw Julian as a force, as something unhuman. He wondered what would happen to him, but he was afraid to slip from behind the white horse and run away.

Julian rode stiffly toward the *hacienda*. Inwardly he was warmed with a sense of unlimited power. He smiled when he thought that in sending him to the plantation his father had conceived a punishment, designed this as a retributory experience. Already the prospect

of life on the plantation aroused his hard enthusiasms. Here all his love of harsh command, his delight in exacting an arbitrary obedience, his secret pleasure in effecting punishments through pain was to be gratified without limit. The spectacle of the slovenly natives, and their slack endeavour aroused him like an abounding quarry in the eyes of a beast of prey. These natives, more than a thousand of them living idly on the plantation, were his legitimate victims, to be worked, to be driven, to be beaten, to be exploited.

Julian laughed. Behind him he heard the half-wit stumbling and panting, like an immense bear, half tamed and half feral, and immoderately fearful of his master.

III

BEFORE General Gorrion made his first visit to the plantation to witness the miracle of Julian's administration, Julian encountered and overcame his first rebellion of the natives.

During the initial week of his appearance as *administrador* he began his work upon them. He appeared early one morning in La Sabana and found a small group of slovenly fellows playing *bolas* between two of the huts.

"Hey, *arrastrados!*" he cried, leaping down from his horse, "when do you begin work here?"

They stared at the young *caballero*, half expecting him to laugh and prove his words a joke. But he did not even smile. He stood among them, frowning and glaring, twisting a long riding whip between the palms of his small hands. A big half-breed, almost as large as Felipe, observing that the young *caballero* was serious, found something ludicrous in his angry supposition. The young *caballero* was without experience, and knew nothing of the habits of La Sabana. He was not aware that a game of *bolas* was the thing in the morning, a sort of agreeable diversion before the more arduous concerns of the day. So the fellow began to laugh; he clapped his hands down upon his thighs, raising

a little cloud of dust from his dirty yellow trousers.

"Ah, señor!" he cried. "You'll learn our ways, you'll learn!"

Julian was upon him in an instant, springing like a puma, striking with his whip in a lashing fury. He beat him across the face, he cut through his thin blouse and raised long, biting welts over both his shoulders, he made him leap into the air with sudden pain. The others stared and breathed out their astonishment in loud gasps. Then, abandoning the lash, Julian resorted to his tongue.

They did not understand his berating; their intelligences were numbed by the avalanche of his abuses. Words battered their ears like incessant blows, and with a gesture Julian drove them all before him, out to the cocoanut groves. They tied their woven belts about their bodies, they fixed the steel spurs to their clumsy shoes, they grasped their machetes in their knobby hands, and ascended the upstanding trees like inept and terrified monkeys.

Afterward, however, the outrage of Julian's conduct shaped itself in their minds, growing up like a weed that leafs out rankly during a few hours of damp and darkness. At noontime, when their women came to them with buckets of hominy cakes and *frijoles*, they consulted together and it became apparent that their liberties had been abridged and outraged without reason.

Julian had gone back to the *hacienda*.

They examined the welts of the whip on the face and shoulders of the victim, and suddenly their slow minds were humiliated with the thought that they had submitted like donkeys, without cause. The young *caballero* was an infant, scarcely more than a child. Anyone of them could pick him up and spin him around on the end of a finger. *Caramba!* They determined to teach him a lesson!

Some of them seized long switches stripped from the dead fronds of the palms, and they ran toward the *hacienda*, yelling like a pack on the scent.

IV

FELIPE, who had found a god who was half a demon for his obedience and his fears, was gathering up a basket of charcoal at the back of the *hacienda* when he heard the yells of the avengers vibrating through the trees like a cacophony of unmelodious devils.

At first he did not understand, and he was assailed by the devastating thought that the terrible *caballero* had called others of his kind to keep him horrible company. He scarcely knew what to expect, what horror he might witness.

A sudden recollection, like the visions of a drowning man, burned up with astonished clearness in his mind, the memory of his former life, the other days on the Rio San Pedro, the languorous, easy hours, the ease of the dirt floor and the damp, warm earth, the wealth of sunlight on his motionless body, the bodily leisure to watch gilded beetles and green and yellow birds pursuing them through the sunlit air. It came to him as the vision of a lost paradise and gripped his heart with the deep, sharp sadness of an ultimate dissolution.

Then the devils appeared; they were not devils, but men he knew, running in a mob toward the *hacienda*.

He watched a moment, dropped his basket, and then ran into the *corredor*. Julian was stretched at his ease in a large wicker chair, smoking a native cigar.

"Señor Julian, Señor Julian!" he cried. "They've come to kill you!"

His mouth dropped open and he trembled violently.

His new faith was suddenly shaken and once more the frailty of the young *caballero* became apparent to him. With his swift conviction of Julian's mortality he ceased to tremble fearfully. A dull gladness replaced his fears and he saw himself returning in a moment to the river and the ways of all his previous life, after a nightmare of many dreadful days.

Julian listened a moment and then

arose. He walked out of the *corredor* and disappeared into the house.

The half-wit, beginning to grin with his great, loose lips, saw the men of the plantation come running around in front of the *corredor*. He heard a step behind him and the young *caballero* reappeared.

He carried a heavy *carabina* in his hands and without hesitation he stepped to the door and out upon the terrace, bringing the *carabina* half up to his shoulder.

The foremost of the avengers, unable to halt his rush and maintain his feet, tripped and fell at his length at the edge of the terrace. The others tumbled among themselves; their dead palm fronds flew out of their hands. Julian began to laugh. He walked toward the fellow on the ground and kicked him two or three times with the point of his shoe.

"*Perro!*" he exclaimed. "*Animal!* Get up!"

The fellow invoked the Immaculate Virgin and crawled away on his hands and knees. Like a mist the others evaporated. Julian turned back toward the *hacienda*. As he entered in the door Felipe, strong again in his devastating faith, fell at his knees and became voluble with incoherent beseechings. Julian pushed him aside with the stock of his *carabina*, thrusting the hard wood into his yielding stomach.

"Where's our fire!" he demanded. "Where's my dinner, *idiota?*"

V

WHEN General Gorrión paid his second visit to his plantation and his unfathomable son, he found new evidences of a singularly efficient administration, but he observed, in addition, a sullenness in the faces seen in La Sabana that gave him moments of disquietude.

"It's their infernal goats and pigs," Julian explained. "I warned them a dozen times. You credit me with very little patience, of course, and I'm not looking to the development of what you might call a virtuous character, but I as-

sure you there's an end to whatever patience I naturally possess."

"What did you do, then?"

"Went hunting. Improved my marksmanship . . ."

General Gorrión wheezed with surprise and blew out his great moustaches sideways in the expulsion of surprised breath. This was more than an ordinary harshness. Shooting down their goats and pigs, about their only tangible property, when they failed to keep their animals properly penned up and out of the cane and gardens, impressed him as especially audacious. At that moment he saw Julian enacting a perilous rôle.

He found himself possessed with a sort of puzzled admiration for the boy, whose harsh, contemptuous soul stood alone, save for its armour of courage and audacity, amongst a thousand resentments, a multitude of hates. The situation was strange, uncanny. Julian ruled without visible backing, enforcing his fiat by the fear in which they held his inscrutable assurance.

The situation troubled the older man. It was unreal, impermanent, like a dream. He considered, for a moment, the advisability of re-establishing the former *administrador* and taking Julian back to the capital. But he could not bring himself to do that. He sighed when he realized that Julian's character remained unchanged. The plantation gave him scope, like a symphonic medium to an artist, for his dark talents.

The day he left to return to the city he endeavoured to warn the boy, give him a trifling sense of moderation. They were walking together down through the village, approaching the *balandra*. Felipe stumbled behind them, carrying a heavy valise in his great paw. Glancing back, General Gorrión observed Felipe with his eyes fastened upon Julian in an idolatrous fear and subjection that startled Gorrión like the shock of a blasphemous word to a believing ear. Felipe, the idolater of a new god, was the crowning unreality in this ominous drama.

"What have you done to that fellow?"

he asked. "Are you entirely discreet?"

Julian only smiled.

"Don't make yourself a dead lion . . ."

"Haven't you observed, father," suggested Julian, "that I have my ways?"

"But your ways, your ways! Santos Dios! What kind of ways do you have?"

Questions sputtered on his lips, but he left them unsaid. In giving them utterance he found a fundamental futility that stilled him, as if querying a dark fate. Julian would go on and find his destiny, an extinguishment or an inscrutable, dark success, somewhere in the setting of this eternal sunlight and transparent air. As they walked down in silence he wondered abruptly what a woman would do for Julian, and then he thought that a woman would signify little in Julian's life, and it came to him that he was growing very old when he could conceive a woman's rôle so unromantically.

They took leave of each other with an embrace, and once more, out at sea, he looked back at the diminishing figures of the small idol and the great idolater, set against a skyline of innumerable palms and an illimitable distant forest.

Julian returned up the slope with Felipe at his heels, and the children in La Sabana ran, hiding away from him as from a legendary terror.

A week later he shot another goat that came up from the village to graze on the terrace of the *hacienda*. Felipe dragged the animal a few hundred yards away and left it on the ground, where, in the evening, two brothers, the owners, discovered their loss and went down into La Sabana with a fiery hate in their hearts.

The next day the brothers achieved an ambushade that failed of its purpose through Felipe's strength.

They hid behind separate palms that bordered the path, and leapt out simultaneously, but a trifle too soon. The courage of their act was derived from a sense of loss that transcended their prudence and their natural fears; their valour was like the valour of cornered rats.

The miscalculation of their leap gave Julian a second to fall back, to avoid the first thrust of the long, glittering *puñales*. Surprised, he found himself for once irresolute. In the instant given to him for thought, he saw no means of defence, and yet the indignity of flight was impossible to his nature. His superlative contempt kept him motionless, after the backward step, as if by contempt alone he could overwhelm and disarm the assassins. He gave no thought to Felipe, who was negligible, and so was amazed to see the fellow jump forward and seize the foremost of the pair about the waist.

His maneuver was successful because they had no eyes for anyone save Julian. As with Julian, Felipe was negligible. He crushed the man to his breast with a monstrous enveloping hug; the knife fell from his hand, and when the knife fell Felipe flung him backward. He stumbled violently against his brother, and the two went down together upon the path. Julian seized up the fallen *puñal*, and held its point at the throat of the one who still instinctively clutched his ineffectual weapon. Felipe, as if he had been a spectator throughout all the encounter, stood grinning and chuckling on the path.

"Hey, *idiota*!" exclaimed Julian, glaring savagely. "Tie them up before I skin the hide from your indolent cadaver!"

VI

JULIAN took the prisoners to the *hacienda* and there, with a quiet fury, he put them to a painful torture. He bound them securely to the pillars that supported the small roof over the doorway. He bound their thumbs with thongs and stretched up their arms above their heads so that their thumbs were pulled upward with a steady, augmenting pain.

All afternoon the sun beat down upon them, and when they called for water Julian smiled with a gentle irony and Felipe slobbered and laughed and trembled in his heart.

Late in the afternoon a woman came

to plead. Julian was still smiling when she spoke the first words of her supplication, but finally he raised his face and met her eyes and his eyes widened, his mouth hardened, the face of a tiger came ferine through the human configuration of his features, and with a startled cry the woman sprang back, and, turning, ran stumbling from the *hacienda*.

In the twilight, sitting within the shadows of the *corredor*, Julian could hear the intermittent groaning of his victims just outside the door.

The light faded swiftly out of the sky, and the screaming of birds was stilled. The palms stood like great, innumerable sentinels of the forest distant beyond their watch, regarding the *hacienda* in a majestic immobility. Huge insects blundered heavily through the humid air, mingling the whir of their wings with the soft groans of the tortured men.

Then Julian observed that they had built a fire somewhere in La Sabana. The cocoanut groves hid the village from his view, but the red reflection was thrown up against the trees, revealing their fanlike fronds and the uppermost reaches of their lofty trunks.

He watched the rise and fall of the crimson light for a while and then, as if a conviction had come to him like a revelation, he stood up quickly and made a sign for Felipe to follow.

Together they went into the house, to Julian's room, and giving the idolater his two *carabinas* Julian watched while he loaded them.

Julian still smiled, but a touch of languor seemed to have entered into his blood like a subtle, enervating fever, and perhaps in that moment he grew reminiscent in a measure, and even a little wondering. Yet he made no effort to avert the danger, and outside the two men hung half by their thumbs, fainting and groaning weakly.

"Go to the door," Julian said to Felipe. "Make it fast."

Felipe went and returned and watched his master as he stood by the opened window, looking down toward the red glow in La Sabana. There was a mur-

mur of many voices coming up faintly in the dead air, and now it seemed to grow louder; you could hear shouts and distant yells.

Felipe trembled and grinned. They were coming up to be slain by his god. He did not understand why they braved this calamity; he was certain of their vanquishment. From the growing shouts he judged that a hundred or more of them were running up through the cocoanut groves. He trembled because he felt that now, at last, he would witness a dreadful miracle. A man could not kill a hundred men with two *carabinas*. The dreadful young *caballero* would presently summon another force.

Felipe's eyes grew rounder, his mouth gaped wider, his knees shook with his fears. He, too, would probably be destroyed in a universal cataclysm. Again, in a luminous second, he looked back upon another time, on the nearly forgotten days near the Rio San Pedro, before his fateful enslavement.

Then he saw the foremost of them come running out from amongst the palms. Julian drew back a little from the window. The *carabina* was jerked up to his shoulder. They came on, still running, their numbers augmented. Sharp reports and momentary flashes of flame came out of the oncoming mob and a dozen bullets struck the *hacienda* like a patter of small stones. Felipe saw the young *caballero* draw his *carabina* close to his shoulder and the heavy report sounded tremendously in the little room.

Felipe leaned forward eagerly and looked out of the open window.

For some seconds he stared into the night, a deep astonishment possessing him. No doubt he expected the miracle then, a miraculous devastation from the single shot. But there was no pause in the onward rush of the natives. Their yells filled the night like the screams of pumas raging in the forest, and now they were swarming up on the terrace.

Julian turned and held out his hands for the second *carabina*. Felipe was about to put the weapon in his hands

when he saw, with a second immense surprise, that the outstretched fingers trembled under his gaze.

A great disbelief assailed Felipe. He hesitated; he glanced once more through the dark square of the opened window. They were almost at the door, a hundred of them, more than a hundred of them. Nothing could give them pause, the young *caballero* had failed, his hands trembled under Felipe's eyes.

With a tremendous revelation he understood. The young *caballero* was mortal!

His heart seemed to swell with his understanding, his head was giddy, his blood was warm. The Rio San Pedro flowed languorously before his eyes, the old days were returned—the old days without servitude, the endless, idle hours lying on the damp earth, the number-

less hours of sunlight caressing him like a woman's hands with enervating warmth.

With a cry of delight, with a bursting joy of liberation, Felipe pulled back the weapon from the trembling fingers, raised it to his own shoulder and fired the bullet into Julian's breast.

He dropped the *carabina* on the floor and leapt out through the tall, open window. He did not heed the cries of the natives; he ran toward the palms, back toward the river, toward his hut and the warm earth and the hours of unceasing rest.

He reached the edge of the terrace and there a dozen bullets found him, and he fell without a sigh, almost, indeed, upon the spot where a stray goat had been killed the day before by the dead boy in the little room.



Chacun à Sa Manière

By Rodney Terriss

THE Thunder crashed and roared across Infinity. The Worm, slowly, unconcerned, crept on, in its tiny bits of undulations. A leaf rolled by. The Worm, scared, hid among the grasses, curled for a long time, and pretended death.



IN England a windmill lights the church and pumps the organ. In this country it often preaches the sermon.



IT'S always the other side that has the slush fund.



The Anonymous Letter

[A One-Act Play]

By Kenyon Nicholson

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

ELMER SWANK

"HONEY," his wife.

CHARLEY GOTT, a neighbour.

SCENE: *The Swank home, East Main Street.*

TIME: *Nine o'clock of a winter morning.*

THE sitting-room of a four-room bungalow. The woodwork is of the most golden of oak. The walls are papered in a grape pattern with a rose border. At the back of the stage there is a door opening onto Main Street. Near the door is a window smothered in heavy lace curtains. Before it stands a luxurious growth of maiden-hair fern potted in a cuspidor-shaped jardiniere. Up-stage, near a door, leading into the bedroom, is an upright piano, with sheet music upon its polished lectern. To the right of the piano, is a door which must take one to the dining-room, or something. Near the closed grate, on the left side of the room, stands an heroic davenport of shiny upholstered leather of the Sears-Roebuck school. A kewpie, a clock, and seashells adorn the mantel-piece. The clock makes you think of trading-stamps. On the left wall, down-stage, hangs a box telephone. There are two rockers and a Morris chair about the room.

A library table, center, bears a lamp with a flowery green shade, a post-card album, a Bible, and numerous magazines: The Ladies Home Journal, The Modern Priscilla, Good Housekeeping, etc. On the walls are three pictures: A foamy print showing "The Maid of the Mist" struggling against the flood beneath Niagara; a crayon portrait of Elmer at the age of three; and a flaming chromo of a happy little tot enticing a dignified Newfoundland with a bunch of cherries. One glance at this room undoubtedly would cause an interior decorator to curl up his toes and pass out; nevertheless, it is comfortable, and quite adequate. The Swanks have as nice a home as any newly-married couple in town; and it is heated by a hot-air furnace, too.

At the rise of the curtain Mrs. Swank, "Honey," is discovered at the door, rear. She is reaching out to see what the postman has left in the mail-box. Honey is quite young and bride-like. She might even look pretty but for her disfiguring gingham house-dress and boudoir cap. She is contentedly humming. Presently she comes down-stage with a magazine and a letter. Tearing open the envelope, she carelessly throws it on the table with the magazine and sits down in a rocking-chair to read its contents. Instantly the humming ceases; her expression changes. The letter must contain exceedingly bad news. She gives a dismayed little grunt. After rereading

the letter she rises and agitatedly paces the floor. It is plain to see that Honey is vastly worried about something. She starts to leave the house, when it occurs to her that she has a telephone.

HONEY

(Ringing the telephone bell.)—Central, give me Black 46 . . . Yes, Swank and Son, lumber yard. Quickly, please! *(She is on the verge of tears.)* Hello . . . El-mer? . . . Yes, this is Honey. Come home at once; something dreadful's happened! . . . I can't tell you. . . . No, only come! Cut through the alley. . . . Hurry! *(Her voice breaks off in a wail as she hangs up the receiver.)*

(HONEY picks up the letter again, starts to reread it, then suddenly she crumples it up and kicks it viciously into a corner. Apparently relieved by this burst of feeling, she walks to the window and looks out. Finally she goes to the piano, and, seating herself on the stool, begins to play the chorus of "The Love Nest.")

HONEY

(Singing in a plaintive little voice.)
 "Just a love nest—
 Co-zy and warm—
 Like a dove rest—
 Down on the farm—
 A ver-an-da with some sort of clinging vine—
 Then a kit-chen where some—some
 ram-bler—ram-bler ros-es—"

(Her voice breaks; salty hot tears fall thick and fast upon the piano keys. Covering her face with her hands she gives herself to violent weeping. She is thus engaged when ELMER SWANK, not stopping to wipe his feet, bursts panting into the room from the street door. ELMER is some years older than his wife and is in danger of becoming fat. He is a respectable citizen wearing sleeve-holders, and is an Elk in good standing.)

ELMER

(Staring wild-eyed at his wife.) What's happened, Honey! What's happened!

(HONEY weeps on, heeding not her husband's frantic inquiries.)

ELMER

(Kneeling beside her.) What is it? Are you scared? Are you hurt?

(Pleadingly.) Honey, tell Elmer!

HONEY

(Sobbing lustily.) You—glub—blub—oh—

ELMER

(Putting his arm around her.) Tell Elmer—where does it hurt the most?

HONEY

(Putting her hand over her heart.) Here—right here!
(She gulps.)

ELMER

(Anxiously.) Your tummy, darling?

HONEY

(Exasperated at his clumsy guess.) My heart! El-mer—you've broken it!

ELMER

How can you say that!

HONEY

Because you have! *(Sniffing.)* Give me your handkerchief.
(ELMER complies.)

ELMER

How have I? What have I done?

HONEY

Everything! *(Blows her nose.)* You've—oh, I can't say it!

ELMER

What are you talking about?

HONEY

(Sobbing afresh.) To think—I thought you were so—loving and faithful! And we haven't been—married a year yet!

ELMER

(*Becoming irritated.*) What are you driving at?

HONEY

No use pretending, El-mer. It won't do any good. It's all over with us. . . .

ELMER

(*Frightened.*) All over!

HONEY

(*Incoherently.*) I found out everything in a letter this morning.

ELMER

What about?

HONEY

You, up at the city last week.

ELMER

(*Starting.*) Me! What did it say about me, I'd like to know!

HONEY

Even the neighbors knew it before I did!

ELMER

Knew what? Where's the letter?

HONEY

(*About to cry again.*) There it is on the floor. And I loved and trusted you. . . .

(ELMER picks up the letter and smooths it out quickly.)

ELMER

(*Examining paper.*) Who wrote it?

HONEY

That's what I can't stand! It's anonymous!

ELMER

Anonymous!

HONEY

Everybody in town is talking about us, I just know.

ELMER

(*With hurt pride.*) And you'll believe what an unsigned letter says before

you'll believe me? Why, Honey, I'm ashamed of you!

HONEY

(*Spiritedly.*) Shame on you, Elmer Swank, for saying you're ashamed of me!

ELMER

(*Sheepishly.*) You know what I mean. . . .

HONEY

(*Reaching for letter.*) Give it to me, and we'll see who ought to be the most ashamed!

ELMER

I'll read it.

HONEY

(*Rising.*) No, I'll read it. So's you can see what you've brought on yourself and me!

ELMER

(*Endeavoring to soothe her.*) I wouldn't, Honey, it'll get you all upset again.

HONEY

(*Reading regardless.*) "Dear Mrs. Swank: (*Blows her nose loudly.*) We are sorry to inform you that your husband recently while up at the city was seen making a spectacle of himself in a certain questionable restaurant in company of another woman. (HONEY looks up to see how ELMER is taking it. ELMER starts to speak, but she hastily continues reading.) From her actions we would say that the party was more than slightly under the influence of drink."

ELMER

(*Vehemently.*) It's a lie—it's all lies!

HONEY

(*Continuing.*) "Obviously you don't know anything about his carryings on up there, and we women think, as friends of yours, that you had ought to know about it while there is yet time to nip his actions in the bud to avoid the town talking. Lovingly, Your friends."

(HONEY ends with a burst of sobbing.)

ELMER

"Your friends!" I've got to laugh at that! Can you imagine your *friends* writing like that just to hurt you!

HONEY

(*Stoically.*) The truth always hurts.

ELMER

There ain't a word of truth in it! It's all a pack of spiteful lies!

HONEY

(*Dropping the letter on the table as if it were a tainted thing.*) I can't believe it, Elmer. It fits in too well with what I smelled on you when you came home.

ELMER

You mean that perfumery?

HONEY

You know. . . .

ELMER

But I explained that once!

HONEY

(*Toying with the letter.*) I believed you then, but I can't on top of this here.

ELMER

(*Desperately.*) So help me God, it was the truth! We went out to a cabaret, and some actresses came down in the aisle singing the chorus, and with atomizers squirted us with perfumery.

HONEY

I wouldn't believe you now on a stack of Bibles!

ELMER

We never even said "booh" to them. Honest! Just ask Charley if it wasn't thataway.

HONEY

(*With narrowed eyes.*) Naturally he'd lie for you!

ELMER

He'd do no such thing! Charley's got honor.

HONEY

(*Angrily.*) None of you men have got honor if you think you're not going to be found out!

ELMER

(*Weakly protesting.*) Now, Honey—

HONEY

You slip out of town on any old excuse and leave your poor green wives at home while you raise Ned with fast women up at the city.

ELMER

(*Indignantly.*) Do you call being a delegate to the Elks State Convention "any old excuse"?

HONEY

(*Carelessly.*) With some its lodge business, and with others just—business.

ELMER

You didn't talk thataway when I came home from lodge that night and told you I was elected delegate. Don't you remember how proud you was of me?

HONEY

That was before I had my eyes opened!

ELMER

Pshaw! Honey, I don't like to hear you talk like that.

HONEY

(*Relentlessly.*) Course you don't! Well, you might as well get used to it. From now on I'm not going to be an idiot and swallow everything you tell me. I'm going to be like any other wife who's learned from experience that she can't trust her husband.

ELMER

(*Meekly.*) Honey, you know you can trust me.

HONEY

(*Snorting.*) I do, do I? You think you can go off on a tear and ease your

conscience by bringing me a two-pound box of candy. (*Pause.*) Oh, I used to be one of these trustful wives—I was even until this morning—but I can see now you're all alike.

ELMER

No, really, Honey. . . .

(*ELMER is perspiring freely.*)

HONEY

Just the other night at the Ladies' Aid social they were talking about how Leon Gall and Roy Price cut up when they were up at the city without their wives. And they were pitying Mrs. Price, saying "poor Mrs. Price" in that mean way and shaking their heads. —

ELMER

You surely don't put me in Roy Price's class?

HONEY

(*Growing tearful again.*) I can just hear them now all along here on East Main Street getting their heads together and saying behind my back, "Poor Mrs. Elmer Swank—isn't it a shame." I know them too well!

ELMER

But I tell you, they got no right to talk! I never *looked* at another woman all the time I was away from you—let alone eat with one.

HONEY

That don't sound reasonable. The Elks are known for being high-fliers when they get out together. I've heard you say so yourself, lots of times.

ELMER

(*Wanting to change the subject.*) Well, what I'd like to know is what dirty, sneaking busybodies sent you that letter!

HONEY

(*Frigidly.*) Finding out won't make your wrong a right.

ELMER

(*Thinking.*) It might have been Birdie Fulmer; she's always snooping

around in other people's business . . . or I wouldn't put it past Georgia Fruits and her flock of old hens. . . .

HONEY

It isn't likely to be her, with her husband up at the city there at the same time as you.

ELMER

(*Earnestly.*) I'd give a silver dollar to know.

HONEY

No use guessing.

ELMER

(*Persistently.*) I know it, but I would like to know.

HONEY

(*Flaring up again.*) What good is it going to do you to know? You've denied it up and down, and you can see the effect it's had. If you deny it folks will only laugh at you. But I'm the one that suffers most. I'll never be able to hold up my head in town again!

ELMER

(*Helplessly.*) Oh, don't say that!

HONEY

(*Sobbing again.*) It's the truth! And I used to think you were going to be such a *good* husband!

ELMER

(*Putting his arms around her.*) I tell you I didn't do it!

HONEY

(*Repulsing him.*) Go away! I don't ever want to see you again! You've killed my love. . . .

ELMER

What can I say—

HONEY

Nothing! Just leave me be! I'm going over to my cousin's in Ohio—right today!

(*ELMER is thunder-struck. He gasps. He hadn't thought married life would be like this.*)

ELMER

(*Frantically clinging to her arm.*)
Honey, you wouldn't leave me because
of that damn letter!

HONEY

(*Struggling.*) Don't you curse at
me, Elmer Swank! Leave go me—
—you're hurting!

(*ELMER releases her and she runs
into the bedroom and slams the door
after her. There is the sound of a key
turning in the lock. ELMER is beside
himself with dismay. He crosses un-
steadily to the bedroom door.*)

ELMER

(*Knocking in a frenzy.*) Honey!
Honey! Let me in! Please! (*He
waits a moment; there is no answer.*)
Honey, I'm sorry for what I said. You
wouldn't leave your Elmer what loves
you, like this? (*The sound of a trunk-
lid being thrown back strikes chill to
ELMER's heart.*) After all, I'm your
husband, ain't I?

HONEY

(*From within.*) Yes, that's my bad
luck!

(*ELMER renews his entreaties and
knocking. Finally, however, he gives
up exhausted. It is, indeed, a black day
for ELMER. He wanders dazedly about
the room; goes to window and stares
aimlessly out upon East Main Street.
Suddenly he becomes animated. He
rushes to the front door, opens it*)

ELMER

(*Yelling into the street.*) Hey,
Charley! Charley! Come here a min-
ute, can yuh?

(*In another moment CHARLEY GOTT,
a neighbor and fellow-Elk, walks into
the room. Charley is tall, unmarried,
well-dressed. He owns a half-interest
in the local creamery.*)

CHARLEY

What's bitin' you, Elmer, you're
white as a sheet?

ELMER

(*Maudlinly.*) Oh, it's all over—
Honey and me's had a quarrel. She's
leaving me—she's leaving me. . . . For
God sake, do something to stop her!

CHARLEY

(*Sympathetically.*) Come on, old
man, brace up! What did it start over?

ELMER

She's found out about that girl I
had out up at the city—

CHARLEY

(*Alarmed.*) You poor fish! You
told her?

ELMER

(*Shushing him.*) Not so loud—she's
in there! Course I didn't tell her.
Some damn dirty sneak sent her an
anonymous letter.

CHARLEY

(*Surprised.*) An anonymous letter!
Who could it of been, do you suppose?

ELMER

(*Hopelessly.*) That don't cut any
ice now; the damage's done.

CHARLEY

Didn't you try to lie out of it?

ELMER

I tried but she wouldn't listen to me
. . . and now I'm losing her.

CHARLEY

You can't lose 'em! She's just throw-
ing a scare into yuh.

ELMER

(*Whimperingly.*) You don't know
Honey!

CHARLEY

Aw, they're all alike.

ELMER

(*Inconsolable.*) Why did I ever let
you persuade me to go out with that
girl! I didn't enjoy it . . . and now
look what it's got me into!

CHARLEY

(*Angrily.*) Don't you blame it on me, Elmer! You know you said you wanted a wild woman and a big time that night. I didn't have to push Mabel on you. (*Sarcastically.*) I suppose you've forgot you asked me to make the date for you.

ELMER

But I didn't realize what I was doing. . . .

CHARLEY

Don't pull any of that Little Lord Fauntleroy talk on me; you went into it with your eyes open.

ELMER

You didn't tell me Mabel got loud when she was stewed.

CHARLEY

No use crying over spilt milk. Let's see if we can't patch it up with the wife. (*Frankly.*) I'm a good liar.

ELMER

That's just what Honey said! It's no use. . . .

CHARLEY

(*Unruffled.*) Gimme a try at it. Call her out.

ELMER

She won't come—she's locked the door. (*Fervently.*) Oh, if I ever get out of this mess, I'll never do such a foolish thing again!

CHARLEY

(*Cynically.*) I've heard many a married man say that before.

ELMER

I mean it!

CHARLEY

Just what did the letter say?

ELMER

(*Listlessly.*) It's on the table—read it for yourself.

(CHARLEY picks up the crumpled piece of paper and looks at it curiously.)

CHARLEY

There'll be a special hot room in Hell for anonymous letter-writers.

(*He begins to read the letter.*)

ELMER

(*Half to himself.*) That don't help me any now. . . .

CHARLEY

(*Reading.*) . . . "making a spectacle of hisself in a certain questionable restaurant." That's wrong! Mabel was acting up—not you. Funny, there's always someone snooping round wantin' to crab a good time. "Obviously you don't know anything about his carryings on up there, and we women think, as friends of yours . . . Lovingly, your friends." I like the way these cats call each other friends. If I had a friend that would send me a letter like that I'd break a hickory club on him!

ELMER

(*Piteously.*) What would you do, Charley, if you were in this fix?

CHARLEY

(*Thoughtfully.*) I can't exactly say, as I've never been married. But you might call her out and make a clean confession. I've heard women like that sort of thing.

ELMER

After I'd swore up and down it wasn't so; You don't know Honey!

CHARLEY

(*Examining the letter again.*) Seems to me I know that hand-writing. Have you thought who might of written it?

ELMER

No good. They've probably disguised their handwriting.

CHARLEY

Let's see the envelope it came in.

ELMER

(*Looking around.*) I never saw it—must be around here somewhere, though.

(ELMER and CHARLEY search.)

CHARLEY

Maybe your wife's got it in with her.

ELMER

(*Giving up the search.*) It's no use looking for it.

CHARLEY

Well, it might be a clew.

(*CHARLEY is moving things about on the table. Underneath a magazine he finds the envelope. He holds it up and examines it closely. A broad grin breaks over his face.*)

CHARLEY

Well, looky here, would you!

ELMER

(*Not much interested.*) What's the matter?

CHARLEY

Well, here's good luck out of Christmas time! Get ready for the surprise of your young life!

ELMER

(*Hurrying to Charley's side.*) What is it, Charley?

CHARLEY

See! This envelope is addressed to Mrs. Harry Swank, *West Main Street!*

ELMER

(*Hardly comprehending.*) What! Harry Swank!

CHARLEY

(*Benevolently.*) You poor fish! All that worrying for nothing!

ELMER

(*Not daring to believe such good news.*) You—you mean Honey got it by mistake!

CHARLEY

(*Patiently.*) Sure! That bone-head mail-carrier delivered this letter to the wrong house. All this trouble should have happened on *West Main Street*, instead of on *East*.

ELMER

(*Gibberingly.*) I can't believe it, I can't believe it! Call Honey! Quick!

CHARLEY

(*Disgustedly.*) You cried before you were hurt.

ELMER

(*With momentary misgiving.*) Are you sure that's the envelope for this letter? Let me fit it in and see. (*He endeavors to insert letter in envelope.*) I can't, my hands are trembling too much. Here, you do it!

CHARLEY

(*Easily slipping letter in envelope.*) See! Besides, the handwriting is exactly the same.

ELMER

(*His courage returning.*) I'm so thankful I could kneel right down here and pray!

CHARLEY

Calm down! Do you want to give yourself away?

ELMER

(*Complacently.*) I might have known that this letter wasn't meant for me.

CHARLEY

Not throwing any bokays at myself, but it's a good thing you called me in.

ELMER

Thanks, Charley. (*Finding it embarrassing to be grateful he changes the subject.*) Well, what do you know about Harry Swank getting caught in a jam like this—he passing the plate at church and all!

CHARLEY

If I had a wife as ugly as his I'd go on the loose pretty often.

ELMER

(*Holding the letter tightly.*) I'm going to call Honey. It's wonderful to make up with your wife when she has to admit she's wrong.

CHARLEY

(*With the air of shedding a bon mot.*) It's one of the few joys of a married man.

ELMER

(*About to lay siege to the bedroom door again.*) Just watch now. I'll show you who's boss around this house. I'll have her eating out of my hand in a jiffy.

CHARLEY

(*Taking his hat.*) None of these touching domestic scenes for me—doctor says they're bad for my liver.

ELMER

(*Disappointedly.*) I wish you'd stay and see me make her jump through the hoop!

CHARLEY

Not on your life! I'm off to the creamery where it's peaceful.

ELMER

(*Warmly shaking CHARLEY's hand.*) I needn't say that this is all strictly between us . . . on account of Honey.

CHARLEY

Goes without saying. Well, so long.

ELMER

So long—see you down at the Home tonight.

(*Exit CHARLEY via the front door. ELMER can hardly contain himself for joy. He prances around the room hugging himself in high glee. Going to the bedroom door he raps lightly.*)

ELMER

Honey, let me in just a minute. I want to tell you something. (*There is no answer.*) Unlock the door, Honey, before I get mad! Something's happened you ought to know about.

HONEY

(*From within.*) Nothing you can say will change me now—my mind's made up.

S. S.—May—6

ELMER

(*Persistently.*) But there's something I want to tell you.

HONEY

What is it—you can tell me from there.

ELMER

(*Teasingly.*) No, I've gotta show it to you.

HONEY

Push it under the door.

ELMER

No, I won't. You'll be sorry, that's all I got to say!

(*There is a short silence. Then, slowly the lock turns in the door and HONEY enters. She is dressed in a coat-suit and is wearing a hat.*)

HONEY

Well, what is it?

ELMER

(*Playing cat and mouse with her.*) You still refuse to believe that I am innocent?

HONEY

(*About to re-enter the bedroom.*) We've been over that enough; I've told you how I feel, and if that's all you got to say—

ELMER

(*Intently.*) And you won't forgive me?

HONEY

My self-respect wouldn't allow it even if my heart would.

ELMER

And you condemn me purely by what you read in an anonymous letter?

HONEY

(*Suspiciously.*) What have you got to show me?

ELMER

(*Drawing letter from behind back.*) Look at this carefully—inside and out.

(HONEY takes the envelope. ELMER strikes a Sidney Carton pose: arms folded, eyes toward heaven.)

HONEY

(Dazedly.) Mrs. Harry Swank—
West Main Street!

ELMER

That's what it says.

HONEY

You mean—you mean—

ELMER

(Quietly.) That's your anonymous letter.

HONEY

And it wasn't to me at all!

ELMER

(Being elaborately gentle.) You could have saved us both a lot of trouble, dear, if you had looked at the envelope before you read the letter.

HONEY

(Bursting into tears.) Oh, El—mer!

ELMER

(Nobly.) There, there, Honey! You did what you thought was right.

HONEY

(Sinking abjectly at his feet.) Oh, don't pity me! Beat me! Kill me! I deserve it for ever doubting you!

ELMER

(Feeling very magnanimous.) Get up, honey. It's all right.

HONEY

(From the depths of humiliation.) I'm not fit for you—you're noble, faithful, and true, and I—oh!

ELMER

Don't say those things about yourself! Let's forget all this and start again.

HONEY

Oh, El—mer, could you ever forgive me? I'll try so hard to make it up to you for the way I acted.

ELMER

(Radiantly.) Of course, Honey.

HONEY

It was only because I love you so much!

ELMER

(Weary of emotional fireworks.) Do you think we ought to forward this letter on to Mrs. Harry Swank?

HONEY

(Pleadingly.) Oh, please don't! It would make her so unhappy. It might even break up their home.

ELMER

Uncle Sam could arrest us for holding a letter that don't belong to us.

HONEY

But such a letter! Let's tear it up—quick!

ELMER

I suppose it's better, thataway.

HONEY

(Seizing upon the letter and tearing it in tiny pieces.) There! That'll never cause any more trouble. Oh, I'm so thankful!

ELMER

(Earnestly.) So am I, Honey!

HONEY

(Timidly.) Sit in the Morris chair, El—mer. I want you to hold me on your lap.

ELMER

(Sitting.) Take off your hat, darling.

(HONEY removes her hat and climbs into ELMER's lap.)

HONEY

(Cuddling up to ELMER.) I'm so tired—I feel sleepy.

ELMER

I ought to be getting back to the lumber yard.

HONEY

Let's just stay this way for a little while—it's been a hard morning on both of us.

ELMER

(Softly.) Yes, darling. (*There is a long silence. ELMER is thinking what a fine thing it is to be married.*) Asleep, darling?

HONEY

No, I was just thinking, El-mer.

ELMER

What about?

HONEY

Did you know that Harry Swank ran

with fast women when he was up at the city?

ELMER

Why, of course not, Honey!

HONEY

I always thought he seemed so nice. You never can tell about husbands by seeing them in their home town, can you, El-mer?

ELMER

No, darling.

HONEY

(*Murmuring contentedly.*) Poor Mrs. Harry Swank!

SLOW CURTAIN.



Surface

By Charles Winship

I CALLED on you today,
We talked of this and that,
But there was a something to say
We couldn't get at.

Our talk was a surface game
Of cobweb people and things,
But waiting within was a golden flame—
Or was it wings?



WHEN the old sins no longer entice us, the devil persuades the reformers to invent new ones.



Slumber Song

By Amanda Benjamin Hall

WHEN blue dust thickens in the air
And all the strands of wind
Are braided like unruly hair,
After the sun goes blind,

And I have signed on slumber ships,
Then am I skipper of the skies,
Strange lyrics written on my lips,
Strange sonnets in my eyes.

Then am I singing, it would seem,
To fairy fiddle and bassoon
Till daylight has dissolved the dream
As morning does the moon.

Oh, sweet and sad and quaintly dear
Are secrets that I never tell,
Which stay to haunt my waking ear,
Each like a tiny bell!

And when the blue dust is no more,
And when my loved ones, kind and gay,
Arise and listen at my door
They always steal away,

And leave me to my raptured hours,
Who smile so strangely as I rest,
Pale with the drug of poppy flowers
Still heavy on my breast.

If death be sleep I wonder why
They gave it not the softer name—
Ah me, but it were dear to die
If dying were the same!



A Morning in Spring

By Maurice Davis

DAWN, pink as the delicate edge of Monsieur's ears, crept through the curtains at the windows, but he did not stir in his bed in the alcove beyond, where the first colourful flush of morning ceased with a sort of hesitancy, as if rebuked by the shadows for approximating so nearly an awakening of Monsieur. Dismayed a little by the barrier thrown across its path, the sun blushed to a rose tint and faintly sought out the blue Persian rug in the sitting-room. Here it spun a reddish gold where not even a Roman gold had been before, and then mounted by slow degrees to the table, weaving a prismatic rainbow over the red, white and blue poker chips which lay in an untidy heap, mixed here and there with a few straggling cards.

The windows were open a little from the bottom, and a warm, softly-scented breeze came through at that moment, turning one of the loose cards over.

Monsieur promptly opened his eyes at the slight sound of the turning card, which, since he had not gone to bed until well after two o'clock, was surprising, and looked out, without stirring, at the table.

The card had not been entirely reversed by the breeze, but only half, and now stood upright against a friendly ash-tray. Monsieur had moved nothing but his eyes up to now, when he rose upon one elbow and studied the card with an exhibition of visible interest.

It was the Queen of Spades that stood, leaning nonchalantly against the ash-tray, returning his gaze with a stoic indifference. The rising sun touched it lightly, as if to delude Mon-

sieur into accepting it as the Queen of Hearts, but Monsieur was careful to observe that while it changed the colour it could not alter the shape.

Strange fate! that the first breath of spring should stir the card of cards. As he gazed his thoughts ran back over the years, ran on and on until they encountered a pair of soft brown eyes, until they brought again a pair of yielding arms about his neck and the music of a low murmuring voice in his ear. In the vision there was a thrill that would be everlasting. Were the thrill destined ever to part with an infinitesimal part of itself it could not at this late day send him a courier down through the crowded corridors of events, a courier who cast off the weight of life as youth casts off fatigue, bringing to him the eternal message of spring, the call of the only true phoenix-bird—Romance—who builds her nest of lovers' hearts and is nourished forever on the silent and forgotten beats.

Very cautiously Monsieur sat up in the great walnut bed. At his side Madame slept unquietly but surely. His gaze sobered as it shifted to her supine form, crowned with a blue lace boudoir cap, as he calculated the satisfaction he might derive from the cigarette he dare not light. Then he glanced back at the Queen of Spades that now, enlivened by another breeze, seemed to beckon to him.

By meticulous degrees he urged his side of the covers down until he was enabled to free his pajama'd legs, and then he carefully replaced the covers.

The morning, he found, upon step-

ping out of bed, was like *her*. Warm, soft, with a scented, caressing touch that brought its dreams. He went to the sitting-room, where, through the open windows, the gentle breeze came through and fanned the lower part of his legs. Not only was there balm in the air, but it pleased him to remark that it brought no chill to the parts of his ankles showing above his slippers, as the morning air had been wont to do.

A sparrow, lighting on the window ledge, chirped to him and then struck a pose while it pointed in an easterly direction with its short black bill. Again it chirped, and, when Monsieur looked, it repeated the call, bill poised in the same direction as before.

"*La reveuse petit d'amour,*" he mused. "You are no doubt telling me that you lost your heart in the time that is behind you. You are merry in the sun, but it could be that you are a philosopher. Maybe she went away with the winter snow, and you have made yourself believe that winter snows must be. They must, ah, yes, they must . . . I wonder what you are pointing at? . . . Over there. Ah, yes, I very nearly forgot. Yes, yes, I will go. So . . . I dress."

The sparrow, as if satisfied that its mission was done, darted off on a path that lightning might have followed, while Monsieur began to dress.

"*Mon dieu,*" he muttered wistfully once or twice as he got into his things. "So wonderful, and I should have perhaps forgotten only for the card and the little sparrow that looked at me as though I had dined on his love. And it is spring!"

His top coat over his arm, he gave one last look into the alcove to satisfy himself that Madame still slept, and then left the apartment.

Down in the street that was deserted save for a labourer or two on the way to work, he did not have far to go to reach a taxi stand. Soon he was seated in a cab whose driver was following his instructions. The time, as shown by his watch, was fifteen min-

utes of six o'clock. He would have time.

The cab crossed a bridge and went out a little way into the country. Monsieur, looking from the window, was impressed with the picture that Nature presented in this stage of her dressing, it striking him that her robe was like a great velvet carpet that had been burnt black and brown in spots. If he had not known, it would have been the means of imparting an insight into why women are not to be spied upon in dressing.

The ride ended at last before castle-like walls and heavy iron gates.

"Isn't this a cemetery, boss?" the driver inquired in a puzzled tone, uncertain whether or not to shut off his purring motor.

"*Oui.* You will kindly ring the bell to the side of the smaller gate."

The curious driver rang and waited. There came sounds along a winding gravel path, and soon an old man in a battered hat that scarcely anybody but a grave-digger could have worn, since the colour was black and the shape of a type seen nowhere but in the white, clam-bake hats, appeared at the gate and turned a heavy key in the lock.

"You're rather early to see the dear departed," he informed Monsieur in a high-pitched, squeaky voice, as the latter made known his wishes. "Go on, though. Ye can't wake anybody up, or I'd be of a different mind about letting ye in. Excuse me fer not swinging the big gate to let yer car by, but we don't let 'em in this early. Jist take that path and ye'll find the section yer looking fer."

For many minutes after he had left the care-taker and the chauffeur out of sight Monsieur walked on. At last he mounted a long hill where a glance about showed him that he was alone in this vast acropolis of the dead. He walked among the graves with a slow, melancholy dignity, coming finally to one at which he paused. Slowly removing his hat he stood by, contemplating the mound and stone with a faraway gaze that betrayed he saw

neither. What he saw was the snow of many weeks ago, and wondered if she had been chilled by the coverlet it had spread so lightly over her. He shivered and looked down. The mound was green with a freshness that denied a frost-hardened earth had ever been. Still, one could not help wondering.

For many moments he regarded the mound at his feet, until at last he began to tremble a little, and, as if unable to maintain his feet, dropped to one knee and bowed his head. Soon a tear trickled down his cheek, falling to the mound as a glistening jewel into a setting of dark green velvet.

"You called me and I heard. You said in the spring. I waited for your message."

When he was sufficiently recovered to rise he took a card case from his pocket and drew from it a tiny photograph. It was very old and he had had it for a number of years, but he gazed at it with an interest fresh as that he might have revealed if the photograph had come into his possession at that moment. Monsieur would have argued, if one curious enough to question him had done so, that the face was without a flaw. Looking at it, one might have objected to the circumstance of the furs the girl wore mounting to her face and burying her nose the way hers did, but a deep look into the eyes might have silenced this objection. One would have constructed a nose and mouth to match the quiet beauty of the eyes that peeped over the edge of the furs, and returned the picture without a further desire to find that which might not have enhanced the eyes.

At last he returned the photograph to his pocket and walked slowly to the path. There he paused and looked back hopelessly at the grave that had so silently accepted his tear.

* * *

Although he hastened, it was eight o'clock before he let himself into the apartment. A glance into the alcove showed him that Madame, in pursuance of her customary routine, still slept soundly.

Quietly he removed his boots and went about in his stockinged feet, picking up his pajamas and draping his discarded things, with a studied carelessness, over the back of a chair. His pajamas regained, he cautiously pulled down the bed-covers until he could slip his feet under them, and then settled snugly into the impression in the mattress that had not been obliterated in his absence.

For several minutes he lay with unshut eyes. The Queen of Spades, he observed, had again been made a plaything of the breeze, for it now lay face downward upon the table. The sparrow, he knew, was chirping with a flock of its kind under the eaves of the shorter houses across the way. The sun had now risen until its golden rays flooded the sitting-room and drove the last of the shadows from the alcove.

Reflecting that indeed it was spring, he turned his back to Madame, composed himself with closed eyes, and soon both he and Madame slept the sleep that persons will who have been up late the night before.



Futility

By Paul Eldridge

TIME, colossal Ant, is building ceaselessly. Eternity, Sacred Ox of the Gods, raises and lowers his mighty hooves.



Curtain

By Marx G. Sabel

THE play is over, the curtain down,
The musicians are carefully packing their instruments.
One by one
The audience walks unevenly up the aisles.

Yes, I know it is done—
But leave me alone for a little.



CONSCIENCE is no longer to be trusted. If you want to know whether a thing is right or wrong, look in the Revised Statutes.



SUCCESS consists in knowing what you want, and getting it away from the man who has it.



THE final test of fame is to have a crazy person imagine he is you.



Surrender

By Jean Cutner

I

THE door of the bedroom in which the Spears were spending their old age opened and Samuel Spear came in. The room contained the usual furniture, and was hung with cabbage-rose wall paper. The November day was stormy, the trees waved and were finely etched against the fluid sky. Turning up the light, Spear took off his collar and prepared for a nap before dinner. They were to have company for dinner, and now he heard his wife in her amiable, shrill voice discussing the fact with Mrs. Lang, their landlady who, with her husband, shared the flat with the Spears.

"There's going to be eight of us, ain't there?" he heard Lena, his wife, say. And a moment later she was in the kitchen, putting the final touches to the meal—and then she came into the bedroom—an undoubtedly energetic woman with the firm, plump body and the red face and greenish eye of the constitutionally efficient and shrewish.

"Oh, Sam—" she began, "As if this was the time to lay down."

Then, called by Mrs. Lang, she disappeared.

Spear lay dreaming, his face pressed into the pillow, his futile spine curved to the soft, rather curly hair edging his baldness.

He shut his eyes, but did not sleep. He heard the bell ring, Lena ushering in some one with a "How are you? . . . I might as well warn you—dinner ain't ready yet," and the pleasantries that followed.

"And you left little Andy home? Well now. . . !" Lena's voice soared in the passionate reproach of a woman

who has never been interested in children and has never wanted any.

On the pillow, Spear's cheek took on a curve. She always says that as if her heart were broken, he reflected good-humouredly.

Loosely he recalled Lena when he was courting her. It had been a breezy spring day, and she stood upright in the field, her voice floating to him: "I just lo-ove children. . . ." And he had looked at her and had been stricken dumb. Then his inchoate thoughts trembled and parted to disclose the heated poesy of his aspirations:

A flower leaning on the wind. . .

And Lena, peering slyly at him and laughing somehow abstractedly, had asked him, "Are you ambitious?" Whereupon, with the inflamed imagination of one in love, he failed to see the matter-of-fact application and—suspecting only a coquettish euphemism—had held her tight and agitatedly.

Her voice now came to him. With the two couples present she discussed the ever-absorbing, commonplace topics: landlords, cooking (in anticipation of the dinner), how many men were out of work. . . . She always dominated the situation, if only by the vigour of her larynx.

"I'm glad my old Sam don't have to work," she was announcing proudly, as if their more or less comfortable retirement were due to her. She had an irritating way—half-proprietary, half-contemptuous—of pronouncing his name.

After all, it *was* due to her. . . . He thought how, urged by her, the two had gone through the years. . . . soon they were middle-aged. They had gone through quickly, hurried, saving—so that they could stop working, fool the

poverty which haunts old age and—retire. Retire! Grand word. Retire to one room, now in this house, now in that. And always, driven. Driven by the fear of a horribly insecure old age. Lena Spear threw her youth into work and scrimping. And now, with a somewhat weary heart, but a pugnacious brain, she knew that they would never lack for a plain living and that—O, terrible shades of ancient street-cleaners! “My old Sam don’t have to work!”

And their youth in marriage—what had it been, what did Sam remember of it? Bodily contacts, innumerable kisses, a small, sordid flat—and work, always work. Was it his fault that this was all he had left in his memory? And if this was all, what was the gnawing that occasionally came on him and, receding, left him with the downcast eye of one who has become, unexpectedly and with a shock, cynical? He never really found out; introspection—the wary wandering about one’s soul—he hazily regarded as an ignominious process. And when, in the mirror, he noticed the exquisite lines of an obscure suffering about his lips, or in his drooping eyes the deepness of disillusion, he said to himself only, “I miss my work.”

However, was he not nearly sixty years old? Time to quit work. Lena was right.

Here she appeared again. “All right now, Sam. Dinner. Oh, you make me tired with your feet on that bedspread again! I told you and told you. . . . You’re that way in everything. . . .” she grumbled.

“I didn’t realise I had them there,” he said as he rose and began to put on his collar and tie. Haven’t the clean collars come from the laundry?”

The tedious marital bubble once again collapsed. “You didn’t realise. . . .” She began needlessly to straighten the articles on the dresser. “Never a day that I don’t fight with you for something you didn’t realise—it makes me sick just to look at you,” she said coldly and yawned.

“Right now look at yourself in the

glass,” he answered, not without humor. With steady fingers he tied his tie; he felt ill.

“I don’t know why I married you,” she said, the same quality of surprise marking the thousandth utterance of this remark as had marked the first. She yawned again. “An animal like you.”

“Don’t you?” he cried in affected astonishment. “For my beautiful eyes, of course. What else does a brainless person marry for!”

Even while he said them, he wondered why he said such words. He did not feel their emotion; speaking to her had lost all emotional significance. Was there something, somewhere, which expected him to suffer and to react to suffering, as he had done years ago—in the fulness of his heart? After all, he was getting old—and barren.

“Sh. . . don’t holler: here they are. Come on.” She led the way into the little dining room, and her Darby followed her.

The Langs and the Hartigans were already at the table—the former, a homely, pleasant, nondescript couple; the latter effusive, sharp-eyed wife and jocular, squinting husband. As Mr. and Mrs. Spear came from their room, the bell rang and the last of the guests entered.

Mrs. Bryce came first, in the ungainly fur coat that short, fat women affect, tall hat-plumes like exclamation points over her ruddy face, in her arms an immense brown bag and magazines. Her husband, the peevish cherub, waddled shortly behind her, stomach protruding, derby in hand. He lived to digest.

“Hello, there!” “How’d’o?” A round of greetings took place. The unpretentious company looked their pleasure at the homely table with no small part of it uncrowded. Holding the bag aloft, Mrs. Bryce exclaimed, with a mysterious wink: “Guess what I have here!”

“The Kaiser!” Hartigan promptly responded. They all laughed joyously. In matters requiring quick tongue-work,

they always held their breaths and Hartigan advanced, to subsequent cheers.

"What have you there?" said Mrs. Spear, reaching for the bag.

Melodramatically, the little, fat woman hissed, sighed for silence, craned her neck—or rather, her several chins—at doors and windows—and importantly delivered the bag to the hostess. From it, then, Mrs. Spear drew forth a jug of hard cider and several bottles of the old-percentage beer.

"Well, now!" she said with pleasure. The usual exclamations followed. Lena shrieked "I just love cider!" They settled in their chairs and the meal proceeded very happily.

Hartigan, the persistent buffoon, drew on his great memory for stale vaudeville wheezes; his wife was a close second in volubility; the Langs kept tab on food and smiled punctually at the sound of Hartigan's voice; Mrs. Spear, excited and warm, grew shrill and still redder, and Bryce, eased and soothed by the repast, watched her glittering eyes fascinatingly. At his side, Mrs. Bryce emitted asthmatic giggles which died noiselessly in the fastnesses of fat.

"Enjoying yourself, Mrs. Bryce?" cried Hartigan and winked at the others as she drew her husband's arm atop of her chair and yearned toward him sentimentally.

Conversation became more unconventional. Warned by the unaccustomed liquor, the company ventured little, ribald jokes and nudged and squeezed one another more or less complacently. Bryce told a smoking-car story, participating in the roar of laughter at the end and slapping Lang, his neighbor, on the shoulder. In the excitement of witnessing his talent as chief entertainer thus elbowed, one Hartigan waved his eyelids and began to squint. They roared again. Bryce cried: "Say, don't he look like that fellow—what's his name, now. . . Ben Turpin?"

This, too, was received with glee. Mrs. Hartigan asked: "Did you see his latest—where he deceives his wife

and she finds him out and bangs his head against the wall?"

Hartigan glanced at her covertly—but she was only regarding the others in inquiry. Lena was contemptuous: "Oh—something like that happens in all those comedies!"

"Men were deceivers ever. . . ." Mrs. Bryce offered languidly; Bryce's hand was squeezing her shoulder.

Thus, the subject having been struck on which most men begin to feel obscurely bored and "out of it"—the women would not relinquish it. The general tone was one of knowingness, of ungenial sophistication: they knew their husbands had other women; (contemptuously); you can't fool your wife.

. . . But then, what's one going to do about it?—and so on. In their heart of hearts they may have known (quite as contemptuously) that the four men at the table with them were so tame that they could feel a smug indignation at a pretty girl's wink. But now, the workings of their minds slightly dulled by liquor, the conversation grew excitable and tedious. Spear sat weary, his hand playing with a fork. Suddenly the women seemed to have talked themselves out, they gazed at one another and at the men with an appearance of feverishness induced by the frank words they bandied. Bryce, Hartigan and Lang said nothing and rarely lifted sheepish eyes from the tablecloth. A silence instituted itself, a silence in which the women ruled.

"Well. . . !" Lena rose and her voice, too, rose like a trumpet: "You men go in the sitting-room, while we get the dishes done." "We" was the tacit acceptance of a help unquestionably to be proffered. The men rose and established themselves in the sitting-room, an ash saucer between them. Their conversation ranged from the recent elections to the conditions of the roads about the city—Bryce was a garage owner. Against the vague beat of pain in his heart, Spear talked loudly and volubly. What was Lena telling about, there in the kitchen, he wondered. The women were giggling with muffled ex-

clamations, and her voice dragged on as if drunken. But no trace of his wonderment manifested itself. He sat complacently, as did the other men, and said:

"I see the world debt to the United States is something like nineteen billion dollars."

Then, rising as if absent-mindedly, he wandered to his room. The men looked after him casually and went on with the conversation. As he passed through the kitchen, Mrs. Bryce avidly regarded him with the raisin eyes sunk in the dough of her face, and Mrs. Hartigan stared with candid inquisitiveness. Even Mrs. Lang vouchsafed him an expression of mild curiosity oddly tinged with guilt. Lena was always shocking the landlady with her frankness and the latter felt her conscience hurt for listening to her lodger.

II

Only Lena, busily orating at the sink, did not look around. The fumes of the hard cider working in her head, she was not even conscious of the mild furore she was creating, and did not notice her husband's presence. He shut the door of their room and sat down in his rocker by the window—what else was there to do?

Staring at the tall, supple tree before the window, he heard Lena telling the women about her early married life. So that's what had excited them so! He felt faintly disgusted with Lena. Why did she insist on impressing people with the happiness of that life—when she, as well as he, knew what it had been?

He heard her talk but could not find it in him to feel more angry.

"You just never saw a couple like us," Lena continued to her subconsciously incredulous audience. She squeezed out a dish-rag and turned a humid eye on the others. The platitude of the married woman was discharged almost before she knew it—"But he always cared more for me than I did for him. He was crazy about me."

The other women glanced at each other and their desire to hear more was

commensurate with their sensation of guilt in listening. So long as Samuel was in the dining-room, out of earshot, they had not felt guilty. But now. . .

"Now, Lena. . ." Mrs. Bryce remonstrated, and Mrs. Hartigan echoed, moving nearer, "Oh, Lena. . . Only Mrs. Lang said nothing—she had heard Lena's confidences before. All were impressed with Lena's way of talking; they almost admired her for the indecency which prompted her candidness—the indecency which, they pompously felt, was not to be found in them.

"Oh, what was—*was*?" Lena threw out carelessly, juggling the cutlery in the rinsing water. "In fact I hardly ever cared for him! Now, of course, you know how it is: we're used to each other. What's the use. . . a girl *has* to marry. . ."

She pushed away with the back of her hand the hair on her burning cheek and threw an adventurous and challenging glance at the others."

"I got no patience for tales of woe. Even if I had anything to complain about. But I haven't. He's always loved me, and he's the same way now. And he's been ambitious, too. How many men of forty-nine do you see around that can afford to retire? Not many, I bet. You got to hand it to my old Sam!"

Her audience gazed at her and avoided one another's eyes. In the bedroom her husband's face was touched with an acrid melancholy. She said, "Just two things have ever bothered me." Lena was nothing if not intensely human. She waited to be questioned.

"As if anything ever bothers *you* . . ." said Mrs. Hartigan promptly and with the right degree of incredulosity.

"Don't say that!" Lena earnestly rejoined. "Of course I always wanted to have children and—well . . . as far as I'm concerned . . ."

Her eye was eloquently blank. Seeing that tactlessness and shrewishness were inseparable in the coarse grain of her, Lena did almost an incredible thing for her, she slanted an ear toward the dining-room before she continued, less

loudly: "And then—you know how it is!—I looked ahead and said to myself: 'Lena, you'll have to live and die alone, unless you marry him.' I have no family, you know. My mother died in the poorhouse. And I've always been awful afraid of death. I just couldn't bear the thought of old age alone—and then dying . . . like that . . . you know . . . with no one I was *used to* around . . ." Her voice grew lower. She was silent, then added: "Then *he* came. I was a funny one for a kid of my age—always looking ahead like that! So we got married."

Two of the women did not answer. Mrs. Lang said, banally, carefully choosing her words so as to be kind: "Yes . . . That's the way it goes . . ." Having lived in a respectable neighborhood all her life, she had grown to be wary of giving or receiving confidences. She really wished now that Lena would stop. It made her feel so—unpleasant. . . .

"Yes," Lena repeated ruminatively, standing with a towel in her hand, her greenish, slightly vicious eyes curiously at odds with her amicable voice. "I never cared about him. But I was wild to know what love was—and it seemed like he was pleasant to have around. And then I was so afraid of dyin' alone—in some pauper's house . . . or scrubbin' floors. . . ."

"And so you never cared for him at all . . .?" ventured Mrs. Bryce bravely lifting her head. She had an acute sense of a situation.

"You had your fun when you were young, eh?" Mrs. Hartigan said, not looking at Lena.

The latter glanced at her. She said nothing. She only smiled, her features suddenly so strangely sweet, her expression touched with so tranquil a mystery, that the other women were struck dumb. Mrs. Lang suffered an actual anguish of fear at a conversation so straightforward.

Lena was the first to march on. Her eyes, a little stupid, but not without malice, viewed her friends; then she exclaimed—the sonorities reinstated in her

voice: "What are the men out there doing?" She moved toward the dining-room, and they—less facile than she in returning to conventionalities because less facile in breaking away from them—followed her.

Bryce Hartigan and Lang had reached their conversational limits and were wandering about, looking for their coats and hats. "Where is my husband?" Lena said, "In our room?—Sam, oh, Sam! Folks are going away!"

Spear came out and shook hands all around. He thought Mrs. Bryce was trying not to laugh, whereas she really was trying to restrain the mechanical sympathy ever on tap in her for the bathos of this life. And Mrs. Hartigan—why did she look so—scornful, was it? But Mrs. Hartigan was only wondering why she had got a buffoon for a husband, and why Lena had never loved this man.

Sam was glad he did not have to say good-bye to Mrs. Lang—just yet. He returned to his room.

III

THERE Lena found him standing near the window. "Were you in here all the time, Sam?" she asked. "Weren't you with the boys?"

"I was here part of the time," he answered. With a little effort he made his tone as cold as the blast beating on the window. "Did you have to tell those women all about our relations, Lena?"

"Oh, who doesn't know such things . . ." She waved the subject away.

He was silent. Then, "Nevertheless," he said, trying to sound calm and honest, "*you* know what our life together has been . . . in spite of all your fairy tales to the contrary. Is there any tie between us now? I don't think so," he answered himself. "Living together is getting harder and harder—" he broke off, then added, "Let us not be hypocrites; let's put an end to it."

She stared: "You don't mean divorce?"

"Separation will do," a voice coming from him replied.

"You've gone crazy in your old age, Sam Spear!" she cried.

She stood before him, laughing, creased with age, yet dominant. He saw her features and felt—actually was animated with—dislike.

"That's so," he said. "If I was the man I ought to be, I'd have walked out to that kitchen and put an end to your gabbling quick enough. Have you no sense of shame, no dignity, no . . ." (What else should she feel? he asked himself, and continued): "no feeling for me at all, that you go and talk the way you did—?" His voice dwindled to a mildness.

Lena stood a trifle undecided. Perhaps she *had* said what she shouldn't have. . . . But was she going to admit it to him—a quiet old man? What had come over him, anyway? Then, with an abrupt feeling of astonishment, she put her hand up to her mouth; tears were rolling down his face. . . . He made no attempt to wipe them, as if he were unconscious of them; he just stood and stared at the floor.

"Oh, all right, all right!" she said, unexpectedly awkward. Turning away to the sewing machine, she began to pull out the drawers as if looking for something.

He regarded her with a transitory wistfulness. Of course, before Lena, there had been Fannie—and after marriage to Lena there had been, somehow particularly, Fannie. Fannie was more fine-grained than Lena—or simply more taciturn. She had a weak, tired prettiness—against Lena's vivid, wooing charms—and an eye that regarded him solemnly and unwinkingly when he talked. It does not matter what she really was. After his marriage to Lena, at first he had endowed Fannie with vaguely expressed but strongly complimentary—in fact, irresistible—attributes. But then he was a dreamer; many men are never dreamers until after their marriage. In Sam's case, the process had been reversed. His dreams of Fannie dwindled to casual, acquaintance-like thoughts.

And himself . . . ? Had he not become so married as to be able to expectorate or pull off his socks in the presence of his wife with quite an innocent expression? . . . Lena's coarseness had reappeared in him, and he became no stranger to it. Why, then, this conversation? The time was past for all such bickerings. . . . He was an old man, and Lena . . . He stared at her back. It seemed tired, dejected. They were both old. . . . All at once a sharp melancholy stung him, and he sighed with hate of it. Still . . . a man has to assert himself.

He opened the closet and the bureau drawers. "I'll go today," he said.

"Where?"

"Oh, I don't know where," he replied, glancing through the window. "I'll let you know. Where are all my other shirts?"

"In the laundry," said she. "They ought to be here in a couple of days, the collars, too."

"A couple of days," he repeated. "Where's my blue suit?"

"At the tailor's. You'd better wait till all these things get back before you go."

He walked over to the rocker before the window and sat down dispiritedly. Yes, he'd better wait . . . the weather might clear up, too. If he felt anything now, it was desolation. He was so used to this room . . . to the tree before the window . . . to the carefully cooked meals . . . to Lena waking him up in the night with her cough. . . . Two days waiting for the laundry. Or perhaps three or four days . . . perhaps a week, he said to himself with unconscious hope. What was the use after all? Did she say he was forty-nine years old? But he was over fifty—fifty-nine was more like it. And very tired.

Approaching him then, a note of pity in her harsh voice, his old wife said: "It's no use, Sam—do you see? It's true I never loved you, but what's the difference now, Sam, what's the difference? We're past that, ain't we? And

after all, we're used to each other. . . ."
Not unkindly she laid a hand on his
shoulder.

He did not look up to the fear in
her eyes. Mechanically he smoothed
his sleeve. A flower leaning on the

wind. . . . Not a wisp of that poetic
feeling haunted him. He was relieved,
and it was with the sort of dreariness
that relief brings that he replied:
"You're right. . . . Of course. You're
right."



The Death of the God of Gods

By Paul Eldridge

USELESS were the genuflections,
the prayers, the fasts, the lam-
entations of the gods of the
world. Their Creator, Lord Supreme
and much beloved, the mighty God
Illusion, who was expected to live
from one eternity to another, end-
lessly, was dead. Time had struck
his heart. The gods of the world
squatted about his corpse in utter
silence, and soon one by one
crumbled, and the wind blew his
dust, as the wind blows the dust of
leaves and butterflies and earths and
suns.

The Earth remained naked, for the
gods had been like gorgeous dra-
peries about her, and the God Su-
preme, the mighty God Illusion, she
wore upon her head a diadem more
resplendent than a setting or a rising
sun. Man's eyes saw the Mother of
Things—a colossal dung-hill, fum-
ing. Upon her wriggled her children,
slimy worms, that devoured one an-
other, and slobbered. Man saw, and
having seen, could not live.



A Girl's Mood

By Lizette Woodworth Reese

I LOVE a prayer-book ;
I love a thorn-tree,
That blows by a wall,
As white as can be.

I love an old house,
Set down in the grass ;
And the windy old roads
That thereabout pass.

I love thin blue frocks ;
Stones green in the light ;
A book of gray prayers ;
And a thorn-bush white.

A lover I love.
Oh, had I but one,
I would give him all these,
Myself, and the sun !



A WOMAN frequently imagines herself desperately in love with a man simply because she isn't in love with anyone else.



CURIOSITY: The reason most of us haven't committed suicide long ago.



SOON there will be no small vices. They will all be crimes.



Conversations

VI.—On Dress

Set down by Major Owen Hatteras

SCENE: *The swimming-pool at the Biltmore.*

TIME: *Ash Wednesday.*

NATHAN

I note that you still wear B. V. D.'s. Isn't it a bit—well, say rather somewhat—?

MENCKEN

Maybe sagacious is the word you seek.

NATHAN

It is precisely the word I do *not* seek. What I get at is that a man of your years and dignity should clothe himself in a more seemly manner. I overlook your overcoats—or, rather, your overcoat. It symbolizes, perhaps, your defective relish for public applause. But a man's underwear symbolizes his view of himself. It constitutes an intimate and secret self-estimate. What he puts next to his epidermis reveals his private notion of his just deserts. Well, I am under no illusion that you regard yourself with anything approaching injustice. Therefore, I—

MENCKEN

Spare me your metaphysics! I wear B. V. D.'s for a plain reason. They are admirable, and they are cheap. Could you imagine garments more intelligently designed? Think of the old-style lingerie that we wore as boys—the thick, knitted undershirts, the long-legged sub-pantaloon. Did you ever hear of such a shirt that was comfortable, or of such a pantaloons that did not bunch at the ankles? Yet mankind suffered those abominations for years. Then, characteristically,

S. S.—May—7

American genius came to the rescue; it is constantly making the world more comfortable. It devised the B. V. D.—and at once wearing underclothes became a luxury. One never hears them discussed any more; they are as silent and efficient as a perfect head-waiter. In the old days every American man talked about his interior swathings. "Have you put on your heavy woolens yet?" And so on. Now every intelligent American wears B. V. D.'s, and the subject has lost all point and interest.

NATHAN

But you miss my contention. I don't object to the *design* of your inside wrappings. What astounds me is that a man so sniffish should wear such *materials*. If your chemise is not cambric, then it must be muslin, or calico, or something of the sort. And if you paid more than a dollar for it, then I license you to hold my head under water for ten minutes. Have you no respect for your person?

MENCKEN

Well, what should I wear, if not cotton? Wool? It scratches. Linen? It is clammy. Silk? It is bawdy. I don't like the feel of silk on my hide. It is far too caressing and luxurious. My work in the world is essentially serious. I am a sort of *liaison*-officer between the American intelligentsia and civilization. Could I do this work reposing on an oriental couch, smoking opium, and with

a couple of loose girls dancing before me? Could I do it immersed in a tub of *pêche Melba*? Could I do it while the Boston Symphony Orchestra played "Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald?" Naturally not. By the same token I couldn't do it bundled up in silks and satins like one of Ziggy's poor working girls. The arts demand renunciation, simplicity, a touch of asceticism. The artist must know how to suffer.

NATHAN

With all due regard for your feelings, mush! I can grant your whole case, and still refute you. Wear a hair-shirt if you want to! Have your B. V. D.'s made of burlap. But how does all this account for the hat you wear? Or for your habitual overcoat? Or for your 50-cent neckties? Beholding you loping along Fifth avenue of an afternoon, one is reminded of a Goldberg cartoon dramatized by Harry Kemp, with music by Erik Satie. It is my contention that such a hat as yours offers a subtle offense to all that is highest and finest in our Christian civilization. It is almost as if you went abroad unshaven, or with a black eye, or with your shirt-tail out.

MENCKEN

Nonsense. You exaggerate rhetorically. The hat is a genuine Knox and cost me a pretty penny. I have it cleaned once a year, and a new band put on. It is a dignified and seemly hat, and quite suitable to my station in life. As for the public effect, I am not interested in it. I suffer enough trying to instruct and elevate the public. It would be going too far to ask me to rejoice it aesthetically also. The hat is satisfactory to me and, I hope, to God. Let that suffice.

NATHAN

Yet you allude to yourself as an artist.

MENCKEN

Exactly. But as an artist in ideas, not in haberdashery. I am not interested in clothes for the same reason that I am

not interested in the postal regulations governing fourth-class matter, or the music of Vincent D'Indy, or the question whether General Ulysses S. Grant went to heaven or to hell. Such matters do not appertain to my avocation, nor to my vices. I am not an actor, and so I don't work with my necktie. I am neither an Episcopal rector nor a stockbroker, and so it makes no difference whether my shoes are shined or not.

NATHAN

Neither do you work with your front tooth. Yet you employ a dentist to half sole and heel it annually, and if some woman threw a beer seidel at you and knocked it out you'd yell for the police.

MENCKEN

Naturally. I eat with my teeth, and eating is not only necessary to me, but a pleasure to me. In fact, it is probably my principal vice. No other vice has ever done me any harm, but I am even now in the hands of the faculty for eating too much. A genuinely tender and well turned Wiener schnitzel fascinates me almost as much as a Methodist deacon is fascinated by the *gluteus maximus* of a chorus girl. I'd gladly leave a hanging, or a performance of Beethoven's fourth—not his fifth or eighth!—or even a quiet chat with some cute one in the falling dusk for such a dinner as dear old Halévy used to serve in the last days of sound white wine. If, as you say, I dress like Jim Morgan in "Ten Nights in a Bar-room," and look sartorially like a bad case of urticaria, then it is simply because clothes do not interest me. I do not aspire to be a Beau Brummel, any more than I aspire to be a vestryman of St. Bartholomew's. Fancy clothes or no fancy clothes, I am pretty enough. If I dressed up it would cause me trouble. I fear the Life Force.

NATHAN

That you are a beautiful creature I do not gainsay. In all the zoos of the world there is not a rhinoceros more

lovely. Nevertheless you must go clothed; you can't walk the earth in the altogether; it would be worse than Bolshevism. Well, being forced by law to garment yourself, why not do it with some good grace? That hat looks like an Allentown, Pa., cuspidor. It affects me like a woman without eyebrows. I don't argue that you should waste hours choosing neckties. All I contend is that you should not carry your disdain of sightly habiliments to the point of phrenitis.

MENCKEN

I return to my primary position. I am a trafficker in concepts and conjectures, not a dancing-master. I wouldn't write any better if my pantaloons were better creased. I don't criticize the world and its ideas with my shirt.

NATHAN

But the world inevitably criticizes you *and* your shirt. You and your shirt would make a very tasty frontispiece for Sinclair Lewis' "Main Street," or George Ade's "Fables in Slang."

MENCKEN

And what of you? Does your greater application to the psychology of regalia get you anything? Say some fool gal is fetched by that new greenish suit of yours, and by that corn-flower boutonniere. What is the result? It costs you \$15 or \$20 to buy her a dinner, you both get a bad stomach-ache, and the next morning you come down to the office grumbling because she confided to you—during the five dollar dessert—that she was in love with a footballer at De Pauw University.

NATHAN

As they put it in New Jersey, there is something into what you say. But what, in turn, does *your* indifference to costumerie get *you*? The only difference between us, so far as I can see, is that one look at you gives the gal stomach-ache without any dinner.

MENCKEN

What is that to me? My work in the world, as I have hinted, is not concerned with what gives people aches in the stomach, but with what gives them aches in the medulla oblongata. My concern is with epistemology, not with intestinal fermentation.

NATHAN

Again you emit nonsense. What you say is simply the old "art for art's sake" buncombe in rather more disarming terms. Assuming that you are an artist, as you somewhat obstreperously maintain, then your duty as an artist is obviously to your art. But in addition there is your duty as a citizen. I contend that it is part of that duty to dress yourself in a respectable and tasteful manner, that there may be no unnecessary public scandal.

MENCKEN

My reply is that I already do so. Do you forget that E. W. Howe once pronounced me the best-dressed man in New York? Howe, true enough, has his defects as a critic of the fine arts. But in this department he was well within his jurisdiction, for he judged me *as an American citizen*. He himself is the archetype of the American citizen, and so I valued and still value his encomium. I question that you yourself have any right or capacity to estimate such things. You are no more American than absinthe, free speech or the sonata form. In the legend that you were born in Fort Wayne, Ind., I take no stock. That is, not permanently. Now and then, of course, I half believe it. When you bought that green necktie with orange spots I was pretty well convinced. But mainly I doubt it. More, everybody else doubts it. Whenever there is a war, the home-loving Vigilantes will accuse you of belonging to the enemy nation, whatever it is. But as for me, no one ever questions my patriotism: it is well known that all I suffer by living among Elks, Moose, Knights of Pythias, Odd Fellows and

Maccabees is offered freely upon the altar of my country. Besides, there is the *imprimatur* of Howe, the most American of all Americans. He anoints me and hands me the cup. An apostolic succession. You can't gainsay it. Howe thought that *you* were a Jap. He had been reading the California papers.

NATHAN

Fair words, but I still mark your hat "Exhibit A" and hand it to the foreman of the jury.

MENCKEN

Whose name, I daresay, is Emil Krausmeyer. He will recognize the patters of beer, and give a *hoch*. As a patriot, I prefer the verdict of Howe.

NATHAN

This Howe admires your façade because it is of the species *au fait* in his native Potato Hill. You are both Neanderthal men sartorially. Sprinkle some baking soda on your hair, roll your *r*'s, and I wouldn't be able to tell you from him. . . . You circle the point of argument. A civilized man's duty is to look like a civilized man, not like the window of a second-hand clothing store in the Jugo-Slovak quarter. When an eyesore like yourself moves down a street, he constitutes an affront to cosmic beauty. I sometimes think that you are in league with a syndicate of oculists.

MENCKEN

And thou? When a circus parade like yourself moves down the boulevard, he constitutes an offense against everything but the high cost of living.

NATHAN

You have little discernment; you are clothes-blind. I do not dress ostentatiously. On the contrary, my decorations are very *piano*. To a rube like you, any man whose collar is not three inches too large for him and whose cuffs are properly buttoned is a fop, and fit for the soft drinks. Anything beyond two ash-carts and an ice-wagon

looks like a circus parade to a man in Pottstown.

MENCKEN

I repeat: my outward aspect is of no importance to me. I take no more interest in clothes than I take in bee-culture.

NATHAN

Well, look at that fellow at the far end of the pool: a beer-keg with a face! Picture him walking down the street *in toto*! Go farther. Picture nine-tenths of the men and women you know walking down the street in the same state! Clothes keep a nation from laughing itself to death. You speak of the Life Force. The Life Force, four times out of five, is clothes, and little else. Shaw, who popularized the term in "Man and Superman," knew it, but was too timid to say so in so many words. Therefore, like Barrie, who is similarly a coward when it comes to stating openly and clearly anything that isn't already a platitude, he resorted to his customary stratagem of concealing it in the stage directions, where only "safe" persons might encounter it. He was afraid to trust himself with the idea before the mob. Turn to page 15 of the text of the play and to his description of Ann Whitefield, his Life Force instrument. He says: "Instead of making herself an eyesore, like her mother, she has devised a mourning costume of black and violet silk." Shaw's subsequent qualifications are only further evidences of his eternal timidity in the face of an idea that is not already generally accepted.

MENCKEN

I follow you only half way. In fact, you follow yourself only half way. You say the Life Force is clothes, and little else, and then you proceed to prove it by showing that some woman character in a Shaw play dresses herself up in order to vamp some anonymous idiot—an idiot who, when he appears before the actual audience, is seen to be an actor! My reply is that I have nothing

to do with such piggery. Having no desire whatsoever to be retired to the stock-farm, I see no reason why I should engaud myself like an opera manager. My clothes cover my person. They are of sound material. Their colours are inconspicuous. All beyond that would be supererogation. . . . Let us now leap into the pool and disport ourselves.

NATHAN

One moment, and I am done. Clothes give biology its touch of poetry. Without clothes, human beings of any refinement would die of disgust. Clothes are the mirages which cause humanity to stagger upward and onward with a smile on its lips and hope in its heart. Where is life the happiest, the gayest? In the great capitals—Paris, London, New York—where men and women pay the most attention to their personal appearance. And where, on the contrary, is it the most sordid and dispiriting? In the yap towns and peasant centres where no one gives a damn what he or she looks like. Consider your own case honestly. Don't you feel something's wrong when you haven't shaved, or when your collar is soiled, or when there is a soup spot on your coat? It's not a matter of comfort, as you will doubtless presently maintain—a soiled collar is just as comfortable as a clean collar, and a spotted coat is just as comfortable as a spotless one—it's a matter of *looks*. Admit it, and let's dive in.

MENCKEN

I admit nothing, save that, as your liver ossifies, you become an utter *ijjit*. What a notion, indeed—that in the little Methodist hells of the back country no one gives a damn what he or she looks like! Is it possible for the human mind to conceive a more thumping piece of tosh? The plain truth is, of course, that it is precisely in the hinterland that all questions of clothes are most important. In Paris, before the war—perhaps the most civilized town then visible in the world—a man could wear practically any imaginable clothes on

the street, and go unnoticed. I myself, when ill with a fever there, once promenaded the Avenue de l'Opera wearing one black shoe and one yellow one, and with an American flag wrapped around my plug hat. Not a soul challenged me. But in such a place as Memphis, Tenn., the cops would have jailed me, and in the average small town in Iowa the peasants would have burned me as a witch. Interest in clothes does not run as civilization runs; it runs *inversely* as civilization runs. It is not in Paris, or Rome, or Munich, or the West End of London that people notice such things; it is in Paducah, Ky., Snow Hill, Md., and the Bronx. You are so horribly the cockney that you simply don't know anything about what goes on west of Union Hill, N. J. If you walked into the average grass town of Maryland wearing that fur overcoat of yours, with that ring on your finger, and with your smoke-coloured walking-suit, the mouzhiks would fall upon you and give you a severe beating.

NATHAN

I take it, of course, that your own draperies do not affront them?

MENCKEN

They do not venture to have an opinion about *my* clothes. I was born and raised in those parts, and know how to keep the peasants in their places. But if I went into your native Fort Wayne, Ind., wearing my Russian fur hat or my ribbon of the *Ordre de la Chasteté*, third class, I'd fully expect to be taken to the watch-house by the town constable. If he let me remain at large; it would simply be because he mistook me for a circus press-agent or a New York dramatic critic. Or maybe a collector for the Armenians.

NATHAN

All this is hollow and without sense. You prove that civilized garments would cause popular uprisings in Maryland or Indiana, and you then argue therefrom that a civilized man should not wear them. This is what you are fond of terming pish-posh. I array

myself in a quiet manner, but do not disdain the elegances appropriate to the season, my surroundings and my station in life.

MENCKEN

I refuse to let you say anything so destructive to your dignity. Say that you wear that fur overcoat because you like, now and then, a gaudy touch—because you frankly enjoy dressing up a bit—and I'll overlook your weakness. I have worse myself. Why do I part my hair in the middle—a fashion that went out 30 years ago? So far as I know, only two other civilized men in the whole world still do it: Frank Harris and Fürst von Bülow. Well, why do I do it? Simply because it is a petty vanity. I confess it freely, and invite all critics of it to go to hell. But when you say that wearing a fur overcoat in New York is appropriate to your station in life, then I protest against the libel. Last night, on my way to the theater with you, I encountered exactly seven other men in such coats. One was a one-night-stand tragedian, one was a writer of popular songs, one was a curb-broker, one was a press-agent, one was a viola player in the Philharmonic Orchestra, one was the music critic of the *Daily Underwear News*, and the other I didn't know. I don't mention the chauffeurs.

NATHAN

Let your point go into the minutes. But your whole logical method is fatal to your case. I saw only three hats like yours between the Beaux Arts and the Century Theater. One was on the head of a pickpocket who had just been taken *in flagrante delicto* by the cops, one was worn by a blind man at Broadway and 47th street, and one was lying in the gutter at 51st street. I should be delighted to have your interpretation of these facts.

MENCKEN

I do not attempt to interpret them. They have, in fact, no significance whatever. My hat means nothing; it is a mere blob. One either notices it or

doesn't notice it. But a fur overcoat challenges the attention. It is deliberately worn to challenge the attention. My point is that the attention thus evoked is humiliating to a man of your dignity. The worst anyone could conceivably suspect me of being, looking at my hat, is an apartment-house janitor or a professor in Columbia University. But looking at your coat, an otherwise quite intelligent person might reasonably mistake you for, say, a vaudeville headliner, the conductor of a German *Liedertafel*, or a member of the Union League Club. I leave the case to posterity.

NATHAN

Well, then, if you are so disdainful of mere investiture, why not simply dress your soul, and let your carcass go bald? I offer to stand on the steps of the Public Library—near the left lion—and watch you pass. You will learn soon enough the politico-socio-economic importance of clothes. There are five gendarmes at Fifth avenue and 42nd street. I offer ten to one that even the fattest of them reaches you and lands his club upon your coco before you escape down the sewer.

MENCKEN

I begin to despair of you. Now you try to argue that clothes are important by showing that policemen think they are important. What next? A policeman is a man who is fined \$2 if he reports for work without his shoes shined. *Ergo*, he believes that having his shoes shined is more important than—

NATHAN

But what of Ibsen? He had his shoes shined twice a day.

MENCKEN

Ibsen? Now you introduce Ibsen! God help us all! Tell the coroner that I leave my sapphires to Eleanor. Give Marie my—

(*He dives.*)

NATHAN

Your hat?
(*He dives.*)

Annie Kearney

By Frances Norville Chapman

I

ANNIE KEARNEY had an uncle who was eaten by a bear. It happened years before I was born, but I had heard my mother and the neighbours tell the tale until I knew it by heart with all its variations. I went through primary and grammar school with Annie Kearney, but I never knew her very well, and I never quite dared to ask her about her uncle, although I often wanted to. Once I went to the cemetery and hunted up his grave.

JOHN KEARNEY, Aged 36.

Eaten by a Bear

September 19, 1869.

was carved on the little stone, and it seemed to me the confession of an ignominious end rather than a statement of fact.

John Kearney had been a hunter from the time he was old enough to hold a shotgun. The growing towns and settlements had driven the big game farther west, and in our section of the Middle West, ducks, quail, squirrel and opossum were the usual bag. But every autumn John went out to Colorado or Montana and shot bear, elk, deer and an occasional buffalo; for in his day the buffalo and the Indian still ranged certain portions of the western plains. He used to bring back horns and skins of the animals, and he sat around half of the winter telling yarns of his encounters with wild beasts that fought at bay, hair-raising escapes from Indians and assaults from ravenous wolves. "Windy Jack" they called him. Nobody believed a word he said.

In those early days one of the chief autumn diversions was a coon hunt after

night. This was something of a society event. The girls and some of the older women went along, and while the men were off on the trail, they would build a big bonfire and roast potatoes, corn and onions in the ashes, and broil steak and bacon over the coals. After the coon was bagged they would sit around the fire, eating, telling stories, singing and cracking jokes, not getting home sometimes until broad day.

John Kearney was never invited to these parties, for the Kearneys did not belong to the Episcopal church, which, in the days when Brookmount numbered perhaps three thousand inhabitants, put the stamp on one's social status, as indeed it does to this day, and to belong to the wrong set in Brookmount means precisely the same thing that it does on Lake Shore Drive or Fifth Avenue. However, at these merry gatherings, someone was always sure to quote John Kearney or start some exaggerated story of his prowess with a gun, arousing a gale of scoffing mirth.

John used to buy and sell hogs, and one day he went out to the Burton place to look over some stock. The farm was only a mile and a half from town and John walked the distance. He made his deal, ate dinner at the farm and started home about three o'clock in the afternoon. No one ever saw him alive again. No one ever saw him at all. Two days later a pile of human bones was found in a piece of timber between Burton's farm and town, and the torn and trampled brush gave greswome evidence of a tremendous struggle.

I remember hearing one version that there was not even a stitch of his clothing left, and the only way they knew it was John was by the gold fillings in his

teeth. That seemed to me a queer way to identify a man. The next day a party was formed and a huge bear was shot in a nearby woods. It was the first wild bear that had been seen in that part of the country for fifteen years. He wasn't a bit fierce . . . he seemed almost friendly, and one of the men said he was such a great, handsome, glossy brute that he had a qualm of regret as he sent the bullet crashing into his brain.

In my mind this story made the whole Kearney family seem different from other people; it invested them with an unwholesome mystery. It seemed almost disgraceful to be eaten by a bear. "If the bear had left just a little of John it wouldn't have been *so awful!*" I used to think with shuddering disgust, and I wondered how they could perpetuate the shameful tragedy by inscribing it on his tombstone. I used to go on the other side of the street to avoid meeting Annie's father, a mild, stoop-shouldered man who worked in a tinshop. I didn't know why I was fearful of him, nor why I ran when I had to pass their house after nightfall . . . I had a sense of touching a world other than my own. . . .

II

WHEN I was sixteen years old we moved away from Brookmount, and that year Annie Kearney left grammar school and went to clerk in the Boston Store. I can yet remember the touching spontaneity and flowering sweetness of her delicate little face with its tender mouth and wide-set blue eyes, but I didn't recognize her beauty then, none of us did. Even the boys paid no attention to her. She wasn't "one of the crowd," so she was allowed to go her own way, which, indeed, was all she asked, for she was as ambitious as she was pretty, and she hadn't been in the store a year before they had taken her into the office and she was helping keep the books. One day Mrs. J. D. Peck, the wife of the proprietor, stopped at the desk and asked Annie why she didn't come around and hear the new

rector at St. Anne's. Thus she was invited to put her foot on the first rung of the social ladder of Brookmount.

The Pecks, who owned the Boston Store, were from Pennsylvania and were the most influential people in the town. J. D. Peck had been through bankruptcy only once, and that was caused by unstable conditions directly after the Civil War, and in the end he had paid one hundred cents on the dollar, thus proving his reputation as a good citizen and an honourable business man. He was senior vestryman at St. Anne's; he presided at all the meetings of the Town Improvement Board; he was president of the School Board, and he had been mayor so long that some people suggested they might as well make it a life office.

He was a big ruddy man, with a round smooth-shaven face that had been intended to be jovial, and had achieved an enforced and unconvincing sanctimony. He always wore a Prince Albert coat and a well-brushed stove-pipe hat, as we called them in those days. He made his employees feel that they were under his direct protection, under the protection of the whole family in fact. Once behind the counters of the Boston Store, girls and boys who had been passed by for years with a fishy and unseeing eye, were sure of a nod, a friendly word from Mrs. Peck or one of the girls; an invitation to come around and hear the new rector; or they might even be asked to come around to the Peck house and attend a meeting of the Daughters of the King, or the Brotherhood of St. Andrew. Thus there were social as well as pecuniary advantages in securing employment under the Pecks.

There was an immense family connection, headed by Madam Peck, an old woman of prodigious size and age. She was an autocrat and her sleek, shiny, black hair, folded around her head like a cap, did not show a thread of gray, nor her big, shiny white teeth a gap or filling. When her chin emerged from the safe precinct of her warm, fat neck, it revealed an obstinate cut, and her fiery little eyes made one think of an

angry elephant. She always wore jet bonnets and beaded dolmans, and as she heaved her mountainous bulk up the church aisle on the arm of her eldest son, she seemed to shake off glittering points of light. "As fat as old lady Peck" was our term of comparison.

J. D. Peck's wife was an energetic little woman with snapping blue eyes and an assortment of features that looked as though they had been picked haphazard out of a tool chest. She came from Indiana, and although her father's money had made it possible for J. D. to come through bankruptcy proceedings with honour, it was suspected that the Pecks considered her not . . . well, not quite . . . you know. . . . She had borne her husband four daughters and no sons, and occasionally she didn't take the Pecks as seriously as they took themselves, which may have been reason for the family dissatisfaction with this busy little lady who insisted on having her say at all the family conferences.

There were also two old bachelor uncles, twins; a widowed cousin, and Miss Mary of indeterminate relationship, who had charge of the children's department of the store. She was a tall, tragic-faced woman with golden irises to her heavy-lidded eyes. She never joined in any of the social activities of the family, and she seldom waited on trade at the store, but it was often said that she had the brains of the concern. The old twins, Bert and Harry, managed the men's furnishing goods department, and during the holiday rush the older girls and the widowed cousin would come down and help out behind the counters, making a great joke of it among themselves. Some of the town girls used to stand around until Lottie Peck could wait on them, and they would feign indecision in order to prolong their brief intimate association with one of the Peck girls.

They all lived together in a big brown house out near Foster's mill. If there was ever any clash of will or ill-feeling among them, no one knew it. They were clannish and felt that the

most insignificant member of their family was superior to any one else in the town; really felt it, and so we did, too, and accepted them at their own valuation.

There was always a cousin, an aunt or some family relation coming out from Pennsylvania to visit, or to get a little business training, for J. D. was the head of the family in a patriarchal way seldom seen today. Occasionally Cousin Orlando would descend upon them for a night, a day, perhaps only over a train.

Cousin Orlando was always on his way South, or to the Northwest, or returning from California, or planning a trip to some foreign country. He was a big, handsome man with full red lips and dark fruity eyes. His luggage always included a pigskin hat box and a roll of sticks, and he wore overcoats with big sealskin collars and fancy vests with heavily encrusted seals hanging from his watch-fob. There was something romantic and exotic about him that stirred our imaginations. He was unmarried and rich and the Pecks were proud of his sophistication and cityfied manners; they all referred and deferred to him; although it was known that he, on his part, consulted J. D. in regard to his own business affairs and that he had invested money in the store. Whenever there was a family matter under debate, old Madam Peck would settle it by announcing that she would "write Orlando."

Despite his worldly experience, Orlando had his share of the Peck clanish pride of family, and he took them as seriously as they took him, and he never thought of the Brookmount Pecks as funny or provincial.

If the town boys were unaware of Annie Kearney's fresh beauty, the traveling men were not so blind, and many a drummer, haggling over prices with J. D. or discussing fall shipments with Miss Mary, kept an eye on the ripe cheek bending over the big ledger. And because youth and all the illimitable expectation of it drummed in Annie's veins, she was conscious of that

appraising eye, and a flush would rise, staining her cheeks with a delicious wild-rose loveliness as the white lids fell over her flower-blue eyes and a little pulse throbbed in her throat, and she was obliged to go over her balance sheet twice.

It wasn't long before Annie was accepting a whispered invitation for a buggy ride, supper at the hotel, or perhaps a visit to the City Hall where some strolling company gave a play or light opera on the inadequate stage. The men meant no harm; it was a dull little town and they were lonesome and Annie was pretty and friendly with no nonsense about her.

Once when Agnes Herndon was playing "The Daughter of the Regiment" at the City Hall, old Harry Peck saw Annie at the play with a shoe drummer from St. Louis.

There was a crowd of unmarried men in Brookmount whose ages ranged from twenty-five to sixty. They were known as the "fast set." They drank a little, played poker and went off on hunting trips and questionable jaunts to Kansas City and St. Joe, where heaven knows what they didn't do. Some of them belonged to the best families and went to the club dances and the house parties, where they treated the young girls and their mothers with an overpowering respect and deference.

Just the same, there was something about them . . . There was usually a disturbing scent of Sen-Sen on their breaths; they had a way of calling you "little girl," looking you straight in the eyes until your eyes fell, or perhaps they would let their voices fall to a confidential whisper in making the most casual remark . . . Yes, there was something . . . something that filled a girl with a shivery sense of misdoing. Bert and Harry Peck belonged to this set, and although some of the old women spoke of them as having "very bad reputations," no one ever accused either of the twins of making advances to any of the girls in the store. Indeed, they discouraged any familiarity

or flippancy on the part of their employees.

That night after the theater Harry spoke to J. D., telling him about seeing Annie with the traveling man.

"Dear, dear," J. D. wagged his ruddy head. "Now we can't have that sort of thing going on—a nice young girl like that."

And the very next day Mrs. Peck stopped at the desk and asked Annie why she didn't come and hear the new rector at St. Anne's.

Later in the day old Harry pretended he wanted to look up an account, and after puffing and wheezing for a few minutes over the ledger, he cleared his throat noisily.

"Ahem, did you enjoy the play last night, Miss Annie?"

"Oh, yes," Annie replied, the easy flush rising to her cheeks.

"Let's see, you were there with Mather, of Pierce, Gimble and Smith, weren't you? Do you know him well? I was wonderin' where you met him."

"Why, I . . . I met him here in the store; he seems like a nice fellow."

"I guess he's a nice fellow all right, but you can't be too careful about those drummers, here today and gone tomorrow, you know."

Suddenly Annie was covered with an agony of embarrassment. What must the Pecks think of her? She wanted above all things to stand well with the Pecks, and as old Harry looked at her lovely drooping mouth, and wide, troubled blue eyes, he felt a sudden qualm of distrust at his own powers of renunciation, but his voice was merely kind as he added irrelevantly.

"Er . . . have you heard the new rector at St. Anne's? Glad to give you a seat in one of our pews any time you care to come."

"Why . . . why, thank you," Annie stammered, "I'd be pleased to come."

III

THUS Annie began her ascent up the social ladder. It was more like a run-

ning leap, for she was soon teaching a class at St. Anne's, and Lottie Peck, who was her own age, was making a great chum of her. "Come on up to lunch" Lottie would call through the wicket of the desk as she stopped in at the store; or, "Remember, Annie, I'm depending on you to help at my table at the church supper. Mamma says you're to stay all night with me. She's afraid you might have to go home alone," giving Annie a broad wink of humorous understanding. For under Lottie's championship the boys had discovered Annie's beauty; had discovered that she had a blithe and ready laugh; that she was like a thistledown when she danced; that she was never ill-natured, never made them feel out of sorts with themselves. She was the most popular girl in town, and such was her amiable charm that no one begrudged her popularity, unless perhaps it was old Madam Peck.

Although the old lady never hesitated to take advantage of Annie's willingness to run errands, shop for her, stay with her when the family was away, play cribbage, or finish up a piece of embroidery or knitting of which her old hands had grown tired, she didn't altogether approve of her intimacy with Lottie.

"Annie's a nice enough girl in her place, but the first thing you know she'll be getting ideas into her head," she would declare obstinately. "She hasn't any family!"

And curiously enough, for all Annie's popularity, her family remained obscure and unknown. Her younger sister, Faith, was equally pretty, amiable and attractive, but she was never invited any place. Annie was "in it" and Faith wasn't. That was all there was to it; it is the way of small towns. But Faith didn't care; she had no intention of staying in Brookmount anyway. Annie had promised that if she would finish high school she would send her to Kansas City, where she could take a course at one of the business colleges that were springing up over the country.

Annie now had plenty of suitors as well as admirers, but she never allowed any of the boys to "act silly" as she called it. There was a traveling man from Cincinnati who was well received in the town, and for a time she felt stirred when she was with him. She liked his clean fresh skin and the way he wore his good clothes. She wondered if she really cared for him, but when he attempted a clumsy love-making, she knew she did not, at least not "that way," she told herself vaguely.

Sometimes she wondered wistfully why no one ever struck an answering spark in her heart. She had youth—eager, eager youth—and often when she was alone she was filled with a heavenly rustling clamor that left her breathless and set her pulses to drumming. But she was so happy in her work, so innocently vain of her position in the store and her friendship with the Peck girls and their crowd, that there was something like disloyalty in admitting that they were not enough.

After two or three years the boys and girls began to pair off and establish homes of their own. Annie was asked to serve as maid of honour, bridesmaid, and presently she was standing as godmother for Lottie Peck French's first baby.

"Isn't it queer, Annie is so popular, and yet she doesn't seem to marry," some of her friends would say commiseratingly, with a sudden doubt of the genuineness of Annie's popularity.

The spring Annie was twenty-three, Alf Peck came out from Pennsylvania to take a place in the store. He was a nice boy of twenty-two, with a clear, candid gaze and an infectious laugh that immediately won him friends. Back in Pennsylvania his branch of the family had not been very prosperous, but it was understood that Cousin Orlando expected to "do something" for Alf. J. D. put him in the shoe department and promised that eventually he should become manager. Old Madam Peck immediately made a pet of the boy.

"It ain't often the Pecks have both

looks and brains," she would chuckle at some of Alf's quick, impudent repartee.

It wasn't a month before Annie and Alf had begun to watch for each other's comings and goings and there was something poignantly sweet in their vigils. They avoided each other at the store, but when Annie raised her flower-blue eyes from her ledger and caught Alf's gaze upon her, a warm flood would dye her cheeks and as her eyes fell, all the sweet intimacies of life would run before him, and he would wonder if he were worthy. He was just a nice, commonplace, average boy, but he was bringing her something more precious than either of them realized, the first love of a pure and upright heart.

That spring it seemed to Annie that Brookmount had changed. The hot, dusty streets, the ugly little houses had grown beautiful. She felt a warm rush of affection for persons she barely knew. The consciousness of life was upon her. For the first time she thought of death with fear.

There was something pathetic in their groping young love, as yet unconfessed. They wanted to keep it secret, although there was no real need for secrecy except the need of a shy and delicate passion to keep itself inviolate.

However, it wasn't long before it was taken as a matter of course that Alf would be Annie's partner at the dances, picnics or the tennis matches played on Peck's court summer evenings. Presently they wanted to get away from the crowd altogether. At moonlight picnics they would wander off by themselves, and on Sunday afternoons Alf would hire a rig from the livery stable and they would drive out to White River, which ran about three miles from town, where they would rent a boat and paddle down to the dam. Sometimes they did not get home until ten or eleven o'clock at night, but as yet there was no spoken pledge between them.

One day Miss Mary Peck went home to lunch a little earlier than usual. She

stopped at the shoe department and asked Alf if he would mind waiting until she returned.

"Harry's in Chicago and Bert's home with a cold. J. D. has already gone, and I think it's just as well for some of *us* to be here," she explained.

"Why certainly, Cousin Mary," Alf agreed, immensely pleased at the implied trust. "I want to get these new numbers on the shelves anyway, so take all the time you want."

At the luncheon table Miss Mary informed the family that it was reported around town that Alf and Annie Kearney were driving out to White River every Sunday afternoon, and that there was "talk."

"Oh, now, now," J. D. replied fussily, "Annie's a nice girl, and there's no harm in Alf; you shouldn't listen to such gossip."

"He'd be a lucky fellow if he could get her," old Bert wheezed asthmatically. "There ain't a better lookin' gal in town, if you ask me."

"I haven't listened to gossip," Miss Mary disregarded his interruption, the golden irises of her tragic eyes darkening as she spoke. "At least no one has spoken to me, but I've overheard the girls in the shop talking, and Annie is too nice a girl to have her name bandied around in that fashion. I think you should speak to Alf."

"Shut up!" Old Madam Peck never had any manners, but she was not usually so violent. "Speak to Alf, indeed! I've always predicted something like this. If it was Bert or Harry I wouldn't say a word; she could marry 'em both and welcome," thus voicing her contempt for her bachelor sons, "but I won't have Alf getting mixed up with that girl. His father would have a pretty opinion of us if we let his boy come out here and get into a scrape with a clerk in your store without any family or a cent to bless herself with."

"Alf hasn't anything either," Miss Mary dared her, "and Annie is *good*."

"Well he will have something; he's Orlando's favourite, ain't he?" the old

lady roared. "What would *he* think of us? . . . I won't have it!"

With instant acquiescence they accepted her decree, all except Miss Mary, but she knew protest was useless. Years before she had tested her desire against old Madam's will with tragic consequences, and she rose and left the table with heightened colour, her lips drawn in a thin, bitter line.

Annie had been almost like a daughter in that household; she had been Lottie's chosen friend, but they forgot all about that; forgot her years of faithful service at the store, her thousand acts of friendship and eager loyalty.

"What shall we do?" J. D. bleated helplessly.

"Discharge her at once," Mrs. J. D. suggested briskly.

"Don't be a fool," old Madam snubbed her daughter-in-law as she stabbed at her meat with a merciless fork. "You're not to do or say a word yet; I've got to think."

In the end she announced that she had decided to "write Orlando," and Orlando justified her faith by replying that she was perfectly right; that it would never, never do, and that he would stop off on his way to the Coast early next month and perhaps take Alf on West with him.

IV

ORLANDO was bigger and handsomer than ever. His easy, hearty manners filled them all with a festive feeling and made them think better of themselves. Everyone remarked that as he grew older he resembled Madam Peck more than her own sons. He had the same glossy black hair and his increasing girth was a threat that he might even rival her enormous size.

He advised and consulted J. D. He smoked and joked with the twins; he flattered Mrs. J. D. and old Madam, but above all, he courted Alf; talked to him as man to man, told him intimate details of his own social and business life, and without fulsome praise, made

the boy feel that he was a pretty fine fellow, with a shrewd head on his shoulders and his prospects about what he chose to make them. Orlando was sincere enough. He was genuinely fond of Alf and he did not wish to see him burdened with a mistake at the beginning of his career.

"Manager of the shoe department, you say?" he replied to Alf's modest boasting. "Well, I don't know Alf, I believe you could do something better than that. No doubt J. D. would give you an interest in the concern, but there are a good many live towns out in Oklahoma and Kansas where there might be an opening for a smart young fellow to get in for himself. I'd be willing to advance a little capital, if we found the right thing."

Alf glowed and stammered his thanks, immensely flattered and pleased.

"I've been talking with J. D.," Orlando continued in his confidential way, "and while he feels that you would make him a valuable man here, he doesn't want to stand in your way, and if the right thing turned up, he would even be willing to take a part interest with the understanding that you could buy him out eventually. I thought we might take a trip out through that part of the country together and look the ground over. J. D. says he could let you off for a week or two after the first of the month," and as he fancied he saw the shadow of indecision on Alf's face, he added carelessly, "if not now, when I return from the Coast."

That night Orlando called around to see his niece, Lottie French, and he found Alf and Annie snugly ensconced in the swinging hammock on the porch.

When he mounted the steps in his immaculate white flannels, his hat in his hand, his black hair, sleek and glossy as a bird's wing, his full red lips parted in a smile, disclosing his strong, white teeth, Annie thought he was the handsomest man she had even seen in her life, and Alf was so proud and flattered by his interest and attention that

he forgot to feel cheated at not having Annie to himself.

Orlando did not try to persuade Alf to go West, but he never missed an opportunity to refer to it in an off-hand manner as though it were an accepted fact. Alf didn't want to leave Annie even for a little while, but presently he began to think that perhaps it might be a good thing to look the ground over. It would be wonderful to travel with a man like Orlando; it was wonderful the way Orlando recognized his ability and treated him as a companion . . . Well, they were pretty congenial, perhaps more so than Harry or Bert, who were nearer Orlando's own age.

Unconsciously he strutted a little and took on a more authoritative tone in speaking to the clerk in the shoe department. He and Annie did not sit in long, delicious silences now. "Cousin Orlando says this," or "Cousin Orlando says that," or "Do you think it would be a good thing for me to go out to Oklahoma, Annie? You know what you say is going to make a big difference . . . I . . . I want you to decide it, really"—a tremour in his voice and his eyes diffused with a warm tenderness.

"Oh, yes," Annie would answer bravely. "You must think of your future . . . and I'm sure you could make good *any place!*"

"Do you really think so, Annie? Cousin Orlando seems to think I could," he would confess with naïve conceit. "But you bet your life I won't go so far away that I can't get back here pretty often."

Once or twice he tried haltingly to speak to Orlando about Annie, but with dexterous and accustomed ease Orlando would turn the talk to other channels.

However, Alf noted with pleasure that his cousin seemed to like Annie, and he thought she was the most adorable thing he had ever seen when she would flush and look up at Orlando in her little fluttering way as he joked and teased her, and something in her

direct innocence of gaze made Orlando ashamed of himself, made him wish that he hadn't meddled with the thing at all. Once he even tentatively suggested to old Madam that Annie seemed a nice girl and perhaps they'd better let the matter take its own course, but the old lady's disapproval had grown into active dislike, and she flew into such a rage that he hastened to reassure her.

Orlando was forty-nine years old. He had been everywhere, he had seen everything, he had done everything, at least everything that he had wanted to do, but of late he had begun to feel that there wasn't anything that he very much wanted to do. He was bored, and things that he used to like he found that he did not like at all.

However, the gods play queer tricks, and when the first of the month arrived and Alf was free to go, Orlando made some excuse for delaying their departure. For, suddenly, Orlando had found something in the unpurchasable essence of Annie's youth that aroused all of the dormant forces of his desire. He hated it . . . he was ashamed of it . . . It made him dislike Alf, and at times he felt savage against Annie herself. It shook his Peck dignity to think that a little country girl, a clerk in his cousin's country store, could keep him dangling around a hot middle-western town in August, could give him sleepless nights and fitful, uneasy days.

Annie had never been outside the State of Missouri in her life. Except the traveling men she met at the store, she had never known a dozen men who had not been born or spent most of their lives in Brookmount. She didn't have a chance, not a ghost of a chance, and inside of a fortnight she was like a fly on a pin squirming beneath Orlando's hand; but deep down in her heart something seemed to say over and over again . . . "I love Alf . . . It is really Alf I love . . . " But she was in the grasp of something stronger than her own volition; she was helpless, hopeless, filled with mis-

erable, delicious despair . . . "He couldn't care for me; a man like that . . . He wouldn't even look at me, not really, it's just his way!"

But he did look at her. He knew a thousand ways of looking at her; a thousand things to say to her; a thousand ways of meeting her, of communicating with her when Lottie's porch was filled with a crowd of chattering young people.

Yes, Orlando hated it, but he didn't fight it. He just reached out his hand and grabbed, and one night Annie packed her bag and took the seven o'clock train for Kansas City, where she joined Orlando on his trip to the Coast.

She left him at Denver. They traced them that far, but no one ever knew why they separated. Perhaps he tired of her and cast her aside like a glove soiled with his own handling; perhaps she left him, shocked and disgusted with his middle-aged passion. But one evening in October Annie got off the train at Brookmount, a thin, white-faced, furtive-eyed Annie, who hurried away from the station avoiding chance meetings.

Her father shut the door in her face. I don't know what the girl was thinking of, but in her desperation she went to the Peck home and rang the bell. J. D. opened the door, and for a moment he stared, mouth agape. Then he came out on the porch, closing the door carefully behind him.

"Go away," he whispered, not unkindly. "Go away, Annie, you mustn't come to this house . . . Here, do you need money?" But she had disappeared like a wraith in the night.

The next morning they found Annie's dead body in a little stretch of wood at the edge of town.

V

I HAD been away from Brookmount for years, but I came back the spring

after Annie Kearney's death to attend the funeral of my grandfather. Emma Deane told me the story as we rode out to the cemetery to make arrangements for the burial. She said it had been a terrible blow to the Pecks; they seemed to feel it more than the Kearneys, all except Madam Peck, who held the whole Kearney family directly responsible, but for once J. D. defied the old lady and had paid all of Annie's funeral expenses and was sending Faith Kearney to business college in Kansas City. Everyone sympathized with them and their influence in the town was greater than ever it was before.

Emma had to get back to town and after I had talked with the sexton, I wandered about the cemetery which, when I was a child, had been only a small enclosure; today it covered eight or ten acres, a melancholy witness of the town's growth and change. Many of the names on the gravestones were unknown to me, but now and then I would come upon some familiar name or a quaint inscription that aroused a memory or a train of thought of the past which had not been awakened for years.

Presently I came upon a neglected grave. It had remained unsodded and the rough clods were like a wound on the breast of the spring sward. A few stalks of rank grass had thrust themselves up through the clay and a small headstone on the lot had tipped over so that it rested crazily on the head of the recent grave. The wear of weather and time had almost obliterated the inscription on the stone, but I recognized it. I bent for a closer look, pushing aside a tangle of bramble and grass. I could only make out a portion of the name and dates, but traced faintly upon the stained old stone I could still decipher:

Eaten by a Bear
Sep . . mber . . 9, 1 . . 9.

The Pariah

By Helen Trask

I

"YOU are the only woman I ever loved!" he said.
"I know you are telling the truth," she blazed, and refused him.

II

"You are the only woman I ever loved!" he said.
"I know you lie," she breathed, and married him.



The Fog

By Oscar Williams

AMONG cool hills where the shadows
Of a blue dawn are unfurled
The fog is a lost twilight
Blown from another world.

The fog is a lost twilight
Groping phantasmally,
Her glimmering stars are hidden
In her gray cloak's mystery.

Her glimmering stars are hidden,
And only when she has gone
Will cool hills glitter with the myriad
Gold starlight of the dawn.



Glory*

By Edmond Jaloux

"**M**ADAME," said the maid, entering the room in which Sylvia Renée was studying a new rôle, "there is an elderly lady outside who insists on seeing you."

"Ask her her name."

"I did. But she says that it is of no consequence—that Madame doesn't know her and that she must speak to her on a matter of great importance."

"All right. Let her come in."

With a natural desire to make an impression, Sylvia Renée stretched herself on the white bear's skin which covered her divan and stroked back some stray locks of that golden hair which the illustrated magazines of two continents had made famous.

Her surroundings were highly luxurious. The room was filled with carved and lacquered furniture, Chinese porcelains, Venetian mirrors and ornamented glass work. A rose bush, covered with deep red blooms, stood before the half-opened window.

An old lady entered very ceremoniously. She had the air of a bourgeoisie, humble, but well bred. She wore a black silk dress, somewhat shiny, and gloves which had evidently been mended many times. She bowed low to the actress, who greeted her with a certain majesty. Then she said, hesitatingly:

"I beg your pardon for disturbing you. It is a presumption on my part. But if you were a mother, you would understand."

Sylvia Renée couldn't help smiling.

"I am not a mother, madame. But

that doesn't matter. Tell me, all the same. I shall understand you."

"Well, it is this way. I have a son—an only son. He is dying. He has consumption. He is eighteen years old and he loves you. He has seen you often in the theater. You fill his life. For him there is no one in the world but you. If you knew how he talks about you, night and day, I am sure that you would have tears in your eyes. I tell you all this very awkwardly. But I don't know how to put such things. And my rôle in life has not been to talk, but to keep a house going, so that my son and his father should never lack for anything. Now I am a widow, and my son is going to die."

She stopped for a moment, and her lips trembled. Her whole being was enveloped in sadness—an obstinate, dignified, inescapable sadness.

"Don't despair, madame," said Sylvia Renée softly, "what would you like to have me to do?"

"I wish you would come and see him. Only once. It is so much to ask of you! You are so busy and, besides, you are so celebrated, so admired. This love of a boy is nothing in your eyes. But he would be so happy. He keeps saying to me: 'If I could only see her once more! If I could look at her and talk to her a little! I believe that it would reconcile me to death.' Isn't it frightful? And he is only eighteen!"

The mother began to weep.

"What is your son's name, madame?"

"Daleyard. Roger Daleyard."

*Translated by William L. McPherson.

S. S.—May—8

"Oh, I know him. I have had many letters from him, charming letters. He has written me things which no one else has ever told me. Certainly I will go to see him. But you must keep it a secret. I want to surprise him. I am free to-morrow afternoon. I will arrive in costume. That will please him still more."

Mme. Daleyard tried to seize the actress's hands and kiss them, but the latter drew away.

"You take it too seriously, dear madame. It is perfectly natural that I should do this."

The old lady gone, Sylvia Renée went to the mirror and looked at herself.

"Fifty years old today," she murmured, "and this boy who is going to die thinks I have all the charms of youth!"

The next day the actress's carriage stopped before a shabby house in the Rue Montesquieu. Never had Sylvia Renée dressed with so much coquetry as to make this visit to a dying boy's bedside. A long flowing cloak covered the costume underneath—that of *Bérénice*, perhaps her greatest rôle.

Mme. Daleyard opened the door.

"He knows nothing," she said, with an ecstatic smile.

They entered a room which smelled of phenol and creosote.

"It is a miracle!" she cried. "See Roger, whom I am bringing to see you—the very person you have wanted most."

Sylvia Renée saw on a big bed a young man, thin and feverish, with blazing eyes. An expression of super-human happiness came into his face. Clapping his emaciated hands, he said feebly:

"Sylvia Renée! It isn't possible! But how is it that you are here?"

She advanced toward him, regal in bearing, perfectly white, a diadem of gold binding her golden hair, her arms bare—those perfect arms, celebrated the world over. She lied graciously:

"I hadn't received a letter from you, my friend, for several weeks. I was

worried about you and your silence. I made inquiries. One of my agents discovered where you were."

He gazed at her in such a state of exaltation that he hardly caught the sense of her words. In a tumult of happiness, so intense as to be almost painful, he exclaimed:

"You, Sylvia! You, whom I have so often dreamed of, here in my room! I look at you and I see not only *Bérénice*, but *Juliette*, *Hamlet*, *Andromaque*, *Antigone*. I am not worthy to receive you. It is too beautiful an experience. You are not a being like the others. You are a star, a constellation. And you find me in such a miserable room."

He blushed as he glanced at his humble surroundings. She answered:

"The room in which I was born was just like this."

"How good you are! Alas, shall I ever see you play again?"

"In six months you will be well."

"Or dead. But no matter. I have received a visit from Sylvia Renée. I have had as a guest poetry, fancy, love. If I died now, I would die happy!"

He tossed on the bed, coughed violently, and was finally taken with such a paroxysm that the actress went away, promising to come to see him again the next afternoon.

She kept her word. But before going to the Rue Montesquieu she stopped at a florist's and bought an armful of roses.

As she got out of the carriage she saw a piece of crêpe over the door. She mounted the narrow staircase. Mme. Daleyard, weeping, received her—and whispered:

"Last night—a few hours after you went away."

Roger Daleyard lay on the bed, a smile on his lips. Sylvia Renée let drop her armful of huge, sweet scented, roses.

"I can never thank you enough," said Mme. Daleyard. "Through your generosity he died happy."

Then the great actress, the woman

whose fame had spread around the globe, who had her legend like Theodora and Cleopatra, for whom men had risked themselves and killed one another, answered:

"Don't thank me, madame. It is I who ought to be grateful to your son. For it was yesterday, beside his bed, that I understood for the first time the real meaning of glory."



Purchase

By Helen Frazee-Bower

ROSE-PINK and silver-tipped the clouds unfold . . .
God stoops and chooses now a coin of gold

And spends it for my joy: his great sun-fire
This day shall buy for me my heart's desire.

On field and tree the golden glory falls,
Near-things entice and yonder-beauty calls,

Here gleams a dew-drop, there the mingled hues
Of bird and blossom lure (and must I choose?)

Song, wind and wave, a snowpeak and a sky—
With this, the coin of day, what shall I buy?

Now mounts the dawn-spark to the one white flame,
High noon; then twilight—and with that a name

That lingers as the touch of finger-tips . . .
And sudden leaps one wish unto my lips:

The wish to spend God's sun-coin for a star,
And night, and one come back from very far.



CHARITY begins where it is most conspicuous.



Procrustean Law

By Edna Draycourt

I

"VIOLENT-LIDDED, slender-limbed woman," he pleaded, "will you come with me?"
She yawned.

II

"Why I should want to elope with a woman with thin hair and flat hips is beyond me!" he sneered.
She went with him.



Three Old Men

By Mildred Plew Merryman

THREE old men stumped down a street
And one old man saw filth at his feet;

One old man saw shapes behind
A too transparent window blind.

And one old man saw only the scar
Of a new little moon and a pricked out star



MY friends know me to be a romantic bachelor. I often tell them that the only things in life worth while are adventure and mystery. Yet some of them cannot understand why I do not find women attractive.

Caste

By Burton Rascoe

I

ERIC SEWARD, having finished the article he was reading, dropped the magazine to the floor, lighted a cigarette, and then, noting for the fiftieth time that the furniture arrangement in the room did not suit him, telephoned the club clerk to send up some one to change it.

"The fellow's absolutely right," he said aloud to the room's vacancy and with vehemence. Eric occasionally permitted himself the pleasure of an audible commitment when no one else was about. The fellow who was absolutely right was Bernard Shaw, and the matter he was absolutely right about was the desirability of giving natural selection a free hand.

If, say (as Shaw in a fashion put it), a mentally and financially solvent young man of mateable physique should, while walking down the street, encounter a comely young woman who was unknown to him and obviously from a different circle from that in which he moved, the young man should, if a vital impulse directed, go straight up to that young woman and claim her for his own.

Eric had seen a young woman on the street that very morning whom he had particularly wanted to claim for his own. It annoyed him to reflect that he had been checked in his impulse by these class distinctions, which, as Shaw revealed, were artificial, and by these conventions, which as Shaw pointed out, were archaic—and by the municipal anti-flirting law, about which Eric had his own opinions.

"Damn outrageous nonsense," he

reiterated with equal vehemence and to the same vacancy—having especially in mind the municipal anti-flirting law: "No wonder the race is degenerating. Need more fellows like Shaw to shake them up."

The "them" were visualized for a moment in the back of his mind as a crêpe-draped set of meddling old men who framed—and sent good-looking policewomen on the streets to enforce—a law which was manifestly inimical to the best interests of the race. That they chose well-formed and pretty women and did not identify them as of the constabulary with uniforms and badges, he esteemed as particularly heinous.

His irritation served as a stimulus to literary composition and he was about to address himself to the wording of a protest which should be printed under his full name (if it sounded logical) and under his reversed initials (if he were in doubt about it) in the correspondence column of the leading paper—when he heard a rap at the door.

"Come in!"

Joe, one of the club porters, a blond, squarely built, high-cheek-boned youth, came in and, under Eric's direction, set about moving a lounge and bookshelves, a desk and chairs into a pattern more appealing to Eric's vague æsthetic sensitivity.

"Well, Joe, how's tricks?" asked Eric, when the task was under way.

He had frequently chatted with Joe as man to man (they were of an age) when Joe was engaged in work about his rooms, and he had drawn Joe out on various subjects, one of them being women. Eric's curiosity in this field

of research, one is happy to record, was not so limited as his experience.

Eric knew that Joe had two sisters who were tentatively engaged as waitresses downstairs as an experiment while the club waiters were on strike. This information he had come about in a routine sort of way, but his eye had told him that one of these sisters was wholly unattractive, rather blowsy, in fact, and the other quite personable indeed. Eric had, of course, observed this latter sister only cursorily and discreetly but he had remarked an involuntary appreciable difference in the tone and inflection he used when he said, "And I'll have my coffee now, please," to the pretty one and in the tone and inflection he used when he said precisely the same words to the less appetizing sister.

"Fine, sir," answered Joe with that grin which always had secretly annoyed Eric because he could see no occasion for it—he knew Joe was not especially stupid—and which he failed to attribute to embarrassment. The grin made Eric feel uncomfortably conscious that Joe might have something on him, some peccadillo, some observation he had made while piddling about the rooms, which he, Eric, would hate to have generally known . . . Perhaps Joe had seen the salutation of an unfinished letter lying on the desk; or disapproved of the colour of his pajamas; or thought the things girls had written on their photographs were silly; or had got into his collection of *La Vie Parisienne* . . . But perhaps Joe considered him a sly, gay dog and this grin was an admiring tribute to his prowess, hinting at difficult conquests and luxurious bacchanals . . . Still, that grin was irritating . . .

On the lapel of Joe's uniform jacket there was a small white feather which had excited Eric's curiosity now going on five months.

Eric again found himself scrutinizing this feather with a nebulous sort of perplexity and wonderment. The first time he had noticed it Eric assumed that it was only a day's vanity on Joe's

part. And when Joe kept on wearing it, he decided it must be some kind of identification, like a taxi driver's license tag or a gas collector's badge, proclaiming Joe among his brethren as a member of the porter's union or at all events as a licensed scullion. But he had seen Joe on the street one Sunday, and Joe had had on his best suit, and in the buttonhole the white feather rested conspicuously. And he could not imagine a good-looking young fellow like Joe announcing by his button-hole, as he promenaded on his Sabbatical inspection of ankles, that he was a member in good standing of the porter's union.

He had wanted to ask Joe what the feather was for, but somehow that did not seem the seemly thing to do. He could ask Keith Webster what that dingus on his watchfob was or ask Lancy Savage what the crest meant on his enormous ring; but he couldn't bring himself to ask Joe what that feather was for . . . Then, what he had just read suddenly occurred to him and simultaneously occurred, "Damn outrageous nonsense!" this time inaudibly.

"Joe, I don't like to seem impertinent. But would you mind telling me what that feather in your lapel signifies?"

"This?" asked Joe, looking at the feather and then at Eric, the while holding the lapel out for easier inspection. "You mean what this feather is for?"

"Yes, if you don't mind telling me."

"White Falcon, sir."

This answer seemed to satisfy Eric for a moment; but it occurred to him that the White Falcon was as great an enigma as the former one. His curiosity had been laid, and then again it hadn't. If he let Joe go, he would be wondering for another four months what a White Falcon is. And certainly no one among his intimates could tell him. Again Shaw gave him courage.

"But, Joe, do you mind telling me what a White Falcon is or are? Is it a fraternity, a sodality, a union, a

decoration, a club, an honour society, or an anti-cigarette pledge?"

"*Polska*," answered Joe and grinned, for he knew that Eric would be flattered: Eric had been trying to pick up some stray Polish from him, and, after conscientious drilling had acquired two expressions, "*Polska*" and "*dobjhe-mu-tak*" to a degree which might be called fluency.

"A Polish society?" asked Eric.

"Yes, sir."

"And what do you do?"

"We drill."

"For anything in particular or just to be drilling, like a Knight of Pythias?"

"No, sir, we are going to free Poland."

"Ooey! From whom?" Here, indeed, thought Eric, was an interesting situation, an adventurer right in his own room, in the person of a quite ordinary appearing porter.

"From Russia. We are getting together all over the country soldiers and money to free Poland."

(Forgive me, please, if I have hitherto omitted to record that all this took place a year or so before the war—before the council at Versailles relieved Joe and his compatriots of their noble responsibility. And, too, possibly, I have failed to make it entirely clear that Eric was then a very young man, yet in college, and with a decent allowance.)

"And, do you have meetings and all that sort of thing?"

"Yes, sir. We are going to have one tonight."

"Tonight, tonight, tonight," mumbled Eric more to himself than to Joe.

He was pondering whether he had anything to do that night. Moreover, he was consumed at the moment with an ardent desire to be present at that meeting of men who were going to free Poland from Russia. He fancied it would be like eavesdropping at an anarchist plot to overthrow the government, a dangerous enterprise like spying upon the sinister doings of fiery-eyed assassins. But Eric ap-

proved Nietzsche's dictum: "Live dangerously," though he had not to date, unhappily, been afforded a convenient opportunity further to sanction the dictum by deeds.

Possibilities occurred to him in cinematographic order. Even if Joe should consent to smuggle him past the guards, he would, doubtless, have to learn an incredibly difficult set of pass-words in an impossible space of time. And then, if he should fail, instant death! If he blundered by so much as a misplaced consonant or a false guttural, he would be recognized, his throat would be cut, probably, and his body thrown into the river . . . There were many things he had wanted to do in life . . . His technique with Louis had proved faulty . . . He had been delegated to the fraternity convention next June . . . Waldron still owed him that money . . . He ought to leave a note telling where he was going. His father surely would set an investigation afoot, and his murderers might be discovered, and the plot to free Poland would go up the spout. But that would be little consolation to a young man with a slit throat, floating down the river. Still . . . "Live dangerously."

"I suppose it would be quite impossible for you to take me along tonight, wouldn't it?"

"No," and Joe grinned. "You can go 'long if you want to. We dance and have big time. You want to go 'long?"

Eric jumped up and, overjoyed at the prospect of attending a secret meeting to free Poland without any danger to himself, began pumping Joe as to what he would be required to wear, when the thing took place, and where he was to meet Joe.

II

At eight o'clock Eric stood on the street corner which Joe had designated. To tell the truth, he was a trifle disappointed in the prospects for the evening.

After all, he mused, this plot (it had ineradicably become a plot in his mind), this plot, it seems, is not up to much snuff if any outsider can attend the conclaves without encountering difficulties. But then, one couldn't tell; possibly Joe felt faith in him, entertained a conviction that Eric would not report the meeting to the police. It was a flattering conclusion. He had, no doubt, the type of face that inspires confidence. But was that a wholly desirable trait? Some doctors have it. And doctors are rather to be envied certain secrets. And priests. But weren't there some disadvantages in being the recipient of confessions? . . . No matter, Joe had trusted him, and not a word should escape his lips.

He was turning these thoughts over in his mind when he espied Joe crossing the street in his direction. Amazement overcast him when he perceived that Joe was *bringing his sisters along with him!* A fine sort of secret conclave if women were to be tagging along—and the thought died in his mind; for at that moment he remarked that Joe's younger sister was quite unbelievably lovely and that her taste in dress was curious, but irreproachable. Here before him stood a very caressing assembly of crisp starchings and fluffy web laces, black silk hose and black shoes, the pinkest of pink complexion, hair the colour of burnished bronze, a soft flexible mouth, and eyes which it occurred to Eric, though he had never seen a faun, were faun-like, meaning thereby that they were tender and appealing and confiding and whatnot.

And to the other side loomed Theresa, whose physical shortcomings it is unpleasant to recount.

"I see you here, all right," said Joe. This my sister Theresa; that my sister Theka. We catch that car coming yonder."

It seemed not to matter that Joe had forgotten to mention Eric's name because neither of the girls had said a word during the informal formality. Theresa had giggled. Eric was relieved to observe that Theka had not.

After they had boarded the street-car, Eric was reminded that he did not know Joe's last name and in consequence must perforce, if he mentioned her by name at all, call Theka Theka. And the idea did not displease him. He did not need to be reminded that on this ride he was going to sit by Theka, even if he had to throw Joe and Theresa out of the car. That was a hyperbole which occurred to him; fortunately there was no need to do so, since the feat would have been quite beyond him.

En route Eric had, by way of preliminaries, begun an amiable and spirited and desultory monologue. It was about himself, of course, for his age precluded that. Then for variety he began asking questions. He was puzzled at first that whatever the question Theka answered him only by a nod or shake of the head, looking at him meanwhile with eyes which gave him strange promptings and a smile that he found subtly satisfying.

"The poor child doesn't know any English," he thought, "No, that can't be. She can take orders well enough and explain about the cooking. But maybe, it's only bill-of-fare English. What I am saying is over her head. Still, good God! I can't make conversation out of fillets and chops and cocoa and soup. This is no place to ask her what desserts she would recommend today."

And so he rode the last third of the journey in silence, rather boastful inwardly at having so delectable a creature at his side and wondering what Lancy and Keith would think of her. This line of speculation had carried him so far afield that by the time Joe came forward to tell him that they had reached the meeting hall, he had dismissed Theka altogether.

They climbed two flights of stairs to a large auditorium, wherein was a glorious din of throaty voices, hearty laughter, scraping of chairs and scraping of catgut. At a long table were seated what Eric took to be the leaders in the "plot," the center figure of which

was a florid-faced Silenus with a mass of black hair. To his side were several smart young men in light blue uniforms with red and black trimmings. They were not, apparently, plotting at the moment, but were drinking beer out of huge tumblers. Eric presently became aware that the chief plotter was, if not drunk, at all events in an expressive mood. At intervals he would bawl, "*Vivat Polska!*" in a most disturbing basso profundo. And the entire gathering would take it up.

On a platform in the rear of the room some fifty girls in khaki uniform sat at prim attention, not a little self-conscious. Since Eric saw no men, except the officers, in uniform, he wondered, not unwarrantably, if the women were going to free Poland from Russia. Joe, who had disappeared, came back with four large glasses of beer, which Theresa and Theka and Eric and himself thereupon drank, Eric with a trifle of uneasiness.

While Joe was returning the empty glasses, a violent bedlam broke loose to be concluded by leaving a large floor space vacant, after which the orchestra began a waltz.

Eric watched the others dance for a moment—balloon-busted women and thickset men,—and he beckoned to Theka. The music was somewhat different from that he had been used to, but he managed decently even from the first and Theka followed him with surprising grace. Consciousness of his step was succeeded by consciousness that there snuggled to him a soft bundle of warm femininity and a tingling took place within him. They ended the dance reluctantly.

Eric gave silent thanks when events made it unnecessary to relinquish Theka to take into his arms the unpretty Theresa. The four of them stood in a corner while a pale young man with a falsetto voice announced something which Eric later divined to be a drill by the girls. These martially clad young women executed their maneuvers with skill and Eric found it pleasant entertainment: there were

curves which struck him as exceptionally symmetrical.

In the periodic general scramble which followed the drill as it had followed the dance, Eric gazed about the room and suddenly felt his pulse increase. For, coming toward him, was what he was instantly convinced was the most beautiful girl he had ever laid eyes on. She was dark, lithe, self-assured, with lips that were puckered bits of scarlet velvet and eyes whose glance was a caress. She passed near him and he stared after her. Then, turning to Joe abruptly, he asked:

"Who is that pretty girl, Joe? I should like to meet her."

At that moment he lost whatever answer Joe gave him, because his left hand, which was resting on a chair back, was grasped by a soft hand in a convulsive grip. He turned and looked into eyes in which were mingled despair and the tremulous hope of desperation. They were eyes in which moistless tears lurked—and adoration. They were Theka's.

"Come," she said quickly, "Weel you please, come queek wif me. For a moment, please."

She hurried on out of the door ahead of him and he followed, followed her down the first flight of stairs to the landing. There she waited for him in the dim light. She put her hands on his shoulders and grasped the lapels of his coat.

"Come, walk wif me, please. You weel not meet that girl tonight, weel you? Not tonight, please. I ask you, not tonight. Any night, tomorrow night, not tonight. Tell me, please you weel not, weel you? She ees no good. She got husband already. She got playnta fellows. She ees engaged. Her sweetheart a beeg man. He keel you queek like that."

This incoherent and inconsistent speech dumfounded Eric. He had never been beseeched that way before in his life, nor had any woman ever looked at him in such a manner. He felt tenderness and compassion and even love; but, it occurred to him, that this

was not inevitably the sort of place to show it, with other people likely to descend upon him at any moment or some late comer to encounter them on the steps. He took her arm, patted her shoulder, and led her down into the street. The building was at an intersection of streets, one of which was a well-lighted suburban business thoroughfare and the other was less well lighted. He directed her into the latter.

Theka clung to his arm and began shortly.

"Leesen. I luf you, I luf you, I luf you. Only tonight, mebbe, but I luf you. You be mine, tonight, won't you. My fella, please. You don't want to see that other girl tonight, do you? Tell me no. Please tell me no. You breck my heart eef you spik to her. I luf you."

The entreaty died into a plaint and then into an almost inaudible sob.

Eric was visibly and pertinently affected. He hastily considered what was best to be done under the circumstances and decided that it would not be amiss if he put his arms around the girl and reassured her—and, if this venture was successful, he might kiss her.

The which he presently did. And when her soft, moist lips touched his and clung there Eric experienced those physiological phenomena which mankind has immemorially accounted among its most exquisite pleasures, and which, in the springtime of youth, one does not grow weary of repeating, provided the variety is sufficient. At all events, Eric's faculties soon assembled in cogitable order, which enabled him to a sense of the awkwardness of being encountered while kissing a passively limp figure in the middle of the sidewalk. A policeman was turning the corner.

* * *

"No, sir, I can get the girls home all right."

"Well, thank you, Joe, for a very delightful evening."

Eric lifted his hat, whistled lightly as he walked to the corner, and hailed a taxicab.

III

THAT night Eric lay awake all of half an hour, pondering lost opportunities, unpropitious circumstances and kindred regrets and fell at last asleep, happy in the memory of the suffusing warmth of Theka's lips.

The next morning he was up early. He took a very hot bath. And then he took a very cold one. He examined twelve shirts and eight ties, and, after some deliberation, decided upon his blue cheviot suit. Then he spent an unconscionable time in shaving and dressing. A timidity and a cold fear seized him as he closed the door behind him and strode toward the elevator. His hand trembled as he pressed the button.

"The grill, sir?" asked the elevator operator, hesitating a moment at that floor.

"No. All the way down." Eric had decided to breakfast at the hotel across the street.

In the lobby he met Lancy Savage.

"Hello! How are you, old boy? Just going up for a bite of breakfast. Eaten yet?"

Eric answered in the negative before he had time to check himself, and then, wishing that morning, of all mornings, to avoid the grill, he said, "I was just thinking of eating across the street. Just for a change."

"Nonsense. Come on upstairs. Eats here are as good as any you can get elsewhere, and you can sign your check."

And two minutes later Eric was following Lancy to a table.

Theka was not to be seen, and Eric sat down with a greater feeling of easiness, and with a comforting hope.

When, however, he had looked over the card, he glanced up and saw Theka emerging from the swinging doors which led to the kitchen. She bore a laden tray in front of her. She looked

serene and bright and pretty; but, somehow, Eric wished she weren't there. She served adroitly at the table and, having finished that task, looked about for more stomachs to conquer. She espied Lancy and Eric at the table and came tripping daintily, unswervingly toward them. Eric looked only long enough to observe that there was cool-

ness and remoteness and a business-like servility in her manner.

In a moment she was hovering over Eric's shoulder. Her hand reached out to flip away a crumb in front of Eric. He was appalled an hour later when he recalled that he had wanted nothing so much as to grasp that hand.

"Have you ordered, sir?"



A Motto

By Ethel Talbot Scheffauer

IF God had willed that man be found
All day upon his knees,
He would have made this earth of ours
Less beautiful to please;

That is with many coloured flowers
Enamelled curiously,
And round it, like a faithful hound,
The watchful, growling sea.



ONE need not waste sympathy on ex-convicts, has-been baseball players, or derelict prize-fighters. No man ever sinks so low that he can't come back and be a successful evangelist.



THERE are two kinds of men: those who believe women's lies, and those who get fooled anyhow.



IT'S great fun to be rich. The only trouble is, it costs so much money.



Vindication

By June Gibson

A MINISTER of the Gospel called on a chorus girl with the idea of reforming her.
She laughed at the Church. . . .
He prayed for her.
She laughed at the Almighty. . . .
He wept over her.
She laughed at him. . . .
He slapped her.



Ecstasy

By Charles Winship

DEAREST, your eyes are veiled mysteries,
Fairer than beauty, duskier-sweet than death.
They hide the throb of unvoiced symphonies
Where love and sadness meet and hold their breath.
Your eyes are fresh with woodland secrets, too,
They drink the calm of waters crystal-bright.
They have the elfin glint of evening dew
Under the starshine of a summer night.
And yet they have a woman-wistful grace,
And the madonna softness of their glow
Is such that all who look upon your face
Feel sacred joy through all their being flow.
Your eyes are this for others, but for me—
No heart shall guess the wonder that I see.



Twelve Drops From the Sacred Bottle

By Edwin H. Blanchard

I

THE Irritation of the Obvious.—It is not—the general superstition to the contrary notwithstanding—the demonstration of the obvious that irritates, but the demonstration of the not quite obvious. The demonstration of the obvious—affording as it does the rare privilege of intellectual pity—can give the civilized human being only a mildly pleasant sensation. It is when one approaches the vast blurred conglomerate of emotionalized beliefs, prejudices and intuitions that irritation sets in. Then—at the moment when a clarification of muddled thought is attempted—then it is that the normal human being will be outraged, and will fiercely defend the chastity of his ignorance.

II

Silence.—The notion that silence is symptomatic of wisdom has been fathered by the garrulous of the world, who have been willing to give a patent of wisdom to anyone who would listen. The true inwardness of silence is of a different colour; it is to the genuinely wise what the *cæsura* is to a poet wise in his craft.

III

Greenwich Village.—The story of Greenwich Village is an old and tiresome story—the story of the cult of *Causa Sui*. Between a Stevenson playing the maudlin ape to the dodos of the

past, and a long-haired half-wit wailing for freedom, my sympathies are with the half-wit. He is the more decent figure of the two. But all these half-wits would be Minervas without a Jovian spring-board; they gather in a circle and sit on each other's knees. The result—in the shape of various free journals—is as distressing as a twelve-year-old egg.

IV

Marriage.—Marriage is the ultimate—or better, the climactic—disillusionment in the life of the egocentric male. Marriage brings with it an immunity to all subsequent disillusionment. As soon as a man discovers that women look upon his kind, in simple, as the potential fathers of their children, as soon as he realizes that he shall never—save for a few moments in youth—be loved for himself, he knows the ignominy of becoming a means to an end.

A young man with the ordinary heritage of conceit, after various goings hither and thither, will at length discover the one woman who is necessary to make his life complete. He has, perhaps a vision of himself going down the corridor of the years hand in hand with this maiden, in a long springtime of youth and love. But his ears are not attuned to the voices that she hears even as her lips meet his; for he knows no generation after his own, and the surrender that she seems to make has in reality been made by him. She has arrived at her only possible—or pleasurable—goal, while he has, at most,

reached one out of many possible goals. There are other roads that he might have followed—roads that would have brought him closer to a realization of the dreams and desires of his youth. But God, desiring a practical vice-regent on this earth, gave to woman the responsibilities of the race; it is within her heart that the timeless duties of her kind are sheltered, for man is only a moon-struck playful ape, forever flying off at a tangent to his divinely ordained path. It is woman's task to keep him to the unromantic necessities of life, to remind him of his duty to feed and shelter his offspring. For this mission is she given a fascination sufficient to break down the feeble defences of the average male, and the added irresistibility of inertia. For man, tricked, he knows not how, into this everlasting covenant, there remains only the consolation of the egotist; he is not cheated of all fruition of dreams. If he can never get to the promised land of romance—envisioned dimly since the first—he can at least dwell in the bitter-sweet land of marriage, content with the melancholy vision of his own sons passing one by one through the disillusionment that falls to the lot of the average male.

V

Folly.—It is not folly, but the monotony of folly that leads a man to self-disgust. Introspection grows painful the moment that it reveals the difficulties of being a damned fool with any degree of virtuosity. It is humiliating enough to be cast for the part of a clown; but it is much worse to be given a single speech.

VI

Thanksgiving.—If Thanksgiving—notable among holidays—suggests a tableau of domestic amiability, it is, quite simply, thanks to the gluttony sacred to the day. After the mutually distrustful members of a family have gorged far beyond their customary

greed, it is too great an exertion to quarrel. Benevolence is nothing, after all, but a torpor brought on by a plank steak smothered in mushrooms. This, of course, explains why America, the nation above all others given to excess in eating, is the natural home of organized philanthropy.

VII

Talent.—If individuals of promise frequently fail to accomplish what was expected of them, it is easily explicable on the grounds of exhaustion. The most genuine talent can scarcely survive the loss of energy incident to explanation to the lower orders.

VIII

Descriptive Music.—If there is, this side of Hell, any more delightful morsel of solemn asininity than descriptive music, let us have it, gentlemen. It is barely possible that our abdominal walls would not stand anything more convulsive than a recent program offering the "Harold in Italy" symphony and the Saint-Saëns symphony in memory of Liszt; or was it the "Rollo in Topsham, Me." symphony and the symphony in memory of P. T. Barnum? At any rate, the musical critics will no doubt tell me that I have no conception of musical ideas. I ask them to have a care as to how they insult me; push me too far, and I might even be persuaded to employ a little legerdemain on the concert programs. What of the critics then?

IX

Punctuation.—Until I was beyond Sunday-school age, I was convinced that what Christ had said was, "Suffer, little children, to come unto me."

X

Hair-cuts.—The average male, after a hair-cut, resembles a small boy fresh from a pants-warming; he gives off an

odor of hypocritical innocence and cheap cologne. A hair-cut, if not actually immoral, is distinctly unethical.

only a split second to offer an apology for giving you his gloved hand.

XI

The Divination of Character.—The difficulties of divining character are overestimated. It often takes a man

XII

Bartender Stevenson.—The annex to the bar in Hell: R. L. S. serving sugar and water in antique pewter mugs made in Waterbury in 1906.



Pedullus

By John McClure

PEDULLUS sits all day and thumbs his chin.
 "Tomorrow," says Pedullus, "I begin
 To stir the pot of destiny and produce
 A dish, was never cooked since that old goose
 Cackled and flapped upon the walls of Rome
 And saved the city Virgil made his home."
 (Pedullus will indite, some time this week
 The epic marvel which will be the peak
 Of man's attainment in that branch of skits.)
 "Tomorrow," says Pedullus. And time flits—
 Shakes foot, and vanishes. Pedullus sits.



ONLY a child could resent the bursting of a lovely soap bubble; only a puerile lover the passing of a fragile romance.



SOME women buy runabouts; others marry them.



Le Coup De Foudre

By Charles Dornier

LES premières fleches du jour trouant les massifs, éclaoussèrent d'argent les murs du château. Le soleil cuivré parut sur la colline, lentement levé, comme un cor. Au même moment une fanfare de chasse éclata sur les pelouses, détachant du toit l'envol des pigeons ardoisés, faisant piaffer, avec des hennissements joyeux, l'impatience des chevaux du cortège, tandis que, sous les fouets levés des piqueurs, la meute reculai, élançée à nouveau, houle vivante et tachetée.

Le marquis et la marquise de Courrières donnaient leur première chasse de la saison. La fleur de la noblesse provinciale s'était donné rendez-vous ce matin, dans la cour d'honneur du château, hardies et sombres amazones, fiers cavaliers en habits rouges faisant au bas du perron une haie d'honneur aux châtelains qui, galamment se donnant la main, descendaient les marches, souriants à l'aubade redoublée des cors.

Et bientôt tous s'élancent, dans un brouhaha de voix, de galops, de roulements de gourmettes et de fouets, vers la lisière proche du bois, avides de rivaliser entre eux de vitesse, de grâce et d'adresse.

Cependant cette fête cache un drame déjà noué et, parmi ses brillants protagonistes, plus d'un, en apparence joyeux et correct, ronge secrètement un frein de jalousie ou d'angoisse, et écoute clamer en lui, plus haut que celles de la meule, les voies furieuses ou blessées, du désir, de la vengeance et du remords.

Au premier carrefour, le lieutenant Jean d'Orval, le condisciple et l'ami du marquis, sous prétexte de remettre l'ardillon défectueux d'une courroie, laisse dis-

paraître le dernier peloton des chasseurs, puis remonte soudain, s'enfonce au galop par une ligne étroite du sous-bois vers une lointaine clairière d'ombre et de silence, où il pourra envisager avec sang-froid la périlleuse situation.

Depuis longtemps il trompe son ami de Courrières. Longtemps aussi, certes ! il a contre lutté la passion coupable, mais la marquise, volontaire et perverse, l'enivrant de sa beauté, de ses caresses, a su lui verser de longs mois le philtre de douceur, de folie et d'oubli.

Enfin il s'était ressaisi. Il avait annoncé hier à sa maîtresse, à demi-mots, son prochain changement de garnison, son intention de se marier bientôt, de se refaire une vie normale, paisible et honnête. Il en avait assez des rendez-vous clandestins, de ce bonheur criminel acheté au prix de quels remords ! Mais elle s'était révoltée, elle n'admettait point, au moment même où son mari paraissait les soupçonner, ce qu'elle appelait une pire lâcheté, et la dernière des trahisons.

Elle l'avait accablé de reproches, de plaintes, de prières et le menaces, et, ce matin même, dans le vestibule, elle l'avait imprudemment abordé pour lui remettre une lettre écrite sans doute cette nuit, mais pas assez vite pour que son mari, survenu à l'improviste, n'ait tout deviné. Seule, l'arrivée de plusieurs invités avait empêché l'esclandre.

Par un effort de volonté extrême, chacun avait su se contenir, et jouer devant le monde une aimable insouciance. Mais pour être reculée, l'explication n'en serait, pas moins tragique. Elle aurait lieu ce soir, au château, ou, qui sait ? dans un instant, au hasar !

d'une rencontre, en quelque coin sauvage du bois, et peut-être alors y aurait-il une victime imprévue à ajouter au tableau!

Pourtant peu à peu le rythme de la course, le plaisir tout animal de la chevauchée, la fraîcheur de l'air, les odeurs végétales, les feux du soleil sous les arbres, versaient au corps et au cœur du jeune homme un baume apaisant, calmaient sa fièvre, berçaient son inquiétude. De la chasse on n'entendait plus, par intervalles, qu'un appel lointain de cor, ténu comme unbourdonnement d'abeille.

Dans une clairière étroite, entourée d'épaisses broussailles, il arrêta son cheval l'attacha à un arbre, et s'assit sur l'herbe, le dos aux buissons.

En ceinture, son couteau de chasse le gênait; il le déposa derrière lui à portée de sa main, et tira son portefeuille de marocain noir, orné de ses initiales d'argent. Dans une pochette, où des billets de banque apparurent, il prit la missive amoureuse, et s'absorba dans sa lecture.

Derrière lui, alors, lentement, doucement, les buissons s'écartèrent; une tête hirsute s'avança, des doigts noueux s'allongèrent vers le couteau, et, dans un éclair, le rôdeur, s'élançant, d'une main renversa Jean, de l'autre lui enfonça l'arme en plein cœur, puis, s'emparant du portefeuille, d'un bond, tel un fauve, il rentra dans le fourré.

M. de Courrières de son côté avait d'autres idées que le lancer du cerf. Il souffrait indiciblement d'avoir vu crouler, en une minute, sa foi en l'amitié et en l'amour. Aussi, laissant également la chasse, surtout quand il eut constaté l'absence de Jean, il poussa, au hasard des chemins, son cheval; mais, d'avoir été refoulée, par respect de lui-même et de ses hôtes, jusqu'à cette heure, sa rage maintenant débordait.

Il brûlait de rattraper le traître, de lui arracher avec la lettre infâme l'aveu de son crime, et de l'abattre, comme on serre la bête acculée, au pied d'un chêne.

Poussé par la cravache et l'éperon, son cheval, par bonds prodigieux, filait au long des futaies. Sur le sol humide, M. de Courrières reconnut la trace de Jean.

S. S.—May—9

Sa monture était la seule qui trottât à l'amble. Un instant il perdit la piste, mais le bennissement apeuré du cheval le guida vers la clairière funèbre.

A la vue du corps inanimé, son premier sentiment fut une joie brutale. Il y avait donc une justice immanente. Un hasard inconnu avait donc vengé par avance son honneur. Il allait pouvoir reprendre la lettre, connaître en détail la vérité.

Il sauta lestement à terre; sa main fouilla l'habit d'ailleurs vide du mort et la retira sanglante. Effrayé, ne comprenant pas encore, croyant jusque-là à un accident, il l'essuya machinalement à ses revers. Puis découvrant le couteau à terre, constatant l'absence du portefeuille, la stupéfaction, la terreur, la pitié, et aussi le dépit de se voir ravir le secret amoureux et sa vengeance se heurtèrent en lui, dans un grand trouble. La solitude lui fit peur. Il tira le cor de sa ceinture, le porta à ses lèvres, et, par trois fois, lança un long appel . . .

Bientôt le flot des chasseurs en grand émoi envahit la clairière. La marquise y fut une des premières. A demi-folle de stupeur, de rage, de douleur, elle se jeta sur le cadavre, le tint embrassé, puis, sans se soucier des témoins, tigresse furieuse, elle hurla, poing tendu, à son mari: "Son portefeuille! la lettre! c'est vous qui l'avez tué! Voleur! Assassin!" et, les nerfs à bout, elle s'évanouit.

Tout déposait contre le marquis, sa jalousie manifeste des longtemps pour ses invités, la double fuite en pleine chasse, la poursuite, les taches de sang à ses mains et à son habit, la disparition du portefeuille et de la lettre, son air hébété, à l'accusation directe, publique de sa femme. Il y avait sans doute bien des détails inexplicables, le portefeuille introuvable, aucune trace de lutte entre deux adversaires si vigoureux. Néanmoins il fut condamné.

Or, quelques années après, vers le milieu d'août, des gendarmes étaient en tournée du côté des bois de Courrières. Il avait fait la veille au soir un orage épouvantable. Sous un tilleul isolé, que le tonnerre avait écorcé du sommet à la base, ils avisèrent une forme noire

étendue, et reconnurent le corps deminu et carbonisé de Tiennot Vauchez, le braconnier qu'ils avaient souvent mené à la prison de la ville. La foudre avait brûlé tous ses vêtements. Sur la poitrine un tatouage bizarre et brillant apparaissait, profondément gravé.

Le médecin légiste appelé découvrit que c'étaient des lettres entrelacées, un J et un O, surmontés d'une couronne de comte. La mince pellicule d'argent, fondue par le fluide, avait été mystérieusement décalquée en pleine chair.

Et la vérité apparut. C'était lui le

voleur, l'assassin de Jean d'Orval. On se rappela d'ailleurs qu'à l'époque il avait fait avec un argent de source inconnue des "bombes" fréquentes au chef-lieu.

Il portait sans doute le portefeuille, gardé par prudence, caprice ou scrupule, dans la doublure de son vêtement, et par une de ces bizarreries dont elle est coutumière, la foudre, en brûlant tout le reste, avait fait sur le corps cette étrange galvanoplastie, avec les lettres et le chiffre, et marqué, pour ainsi dire, du sceau de son crime l'assassin.



The Light

By S. Michael

THAT is the light in her window.
Stand here with me a moment, friend.

There is no light like it
Anywhere—
It shines upon her!



A MAN ran fast, thinking to overtake Happiness. Turning to measure the distance he had come, he saw Happiness behind him, hurrying to catch up with him.



THE récipé for getting a good reputation must be looked for in the index under the head of keeping a secret.



Emperor William in Exile

By George Jean Nathan

I

EVERY once in so often it becomes necessary for a dramatic critic to write about Shakespeare if for no other reason than to meet his readers' notion of what constitutes his dignity and scholarly footing. The duller he writes, the more dignified and scholarly he is considered. More critics have gained good reputations with bad essays on Shakespeare than one can remember. No Englishman accepted Shaw seriously as a critic until Frank Harris took Shaw's articles on Shakespeare and showed how bad they were. Of all subjects concerned with drama and the theater Shakespeare is the only one about which one may write idiotically with security. It is just as safe, and just as profound, to argue that Hamlet was crazy as to argue that he wasn't. They may contradict you, but they can't prove absolutely that you are wrong. If anyone contended that Paula Tanqueray's moodiness was due to a serious case of persistent glucosuria, he would promptly be set down either as a bad comedian or an imbecile. But let the same person contend that Iago's machinations were undoubtedly prompted by sex suppression and he is forthwith hailed as the propounder of a New Theory.

Let us not too soon deplore the levity of such an approach to the subject. There is more sound criticism in Hunker's "Old Foggy" than in the complete works of Henry T. Finck, including the footnotes. Beethoven's Eighth is a grander thing on three cocktails and a pony of Chartreuse than on a plate of

sirloin. The best criticism of the contemporary French drama is to be found in the farces of Sacha Guitry; and I am not at all certain, for all the estimable Archer's view to the contrary, that there isn't a much sharper criticism of American life in the farce comedies of the George M. Cohan school than in nine-tenths of the more sober plays written during their time. The deathlessness of Shakespeare is a tribute to the deadliness of the thousands of essays written on him. The mortality of a minor poet—say Maeterlinck—is predicated on the complete ease with which lively and interesting essays may be written on him. Genius is the capacity for making others take pains.

I have read perhaps nearly all that has been written of Shakespeare in English, French and German, and, with six notable exceptions, there isn't among all this puffing, pulling and straining one-half the measure of truly revelatory criticism that one finds in the facile, offhand little articles on Maeterlinck by Clarence Day, Jr., and André Tridon. Jules Lemaitre has said that a work of genius has for its authors the poet himself in the first place and later the most original of his readers in the course of generations. "This," he observed, "is truer of Shakespeare than of any other writer. His works might be entitled, 'Complete Works of Shakespeare, by William Shakespeare and by all the poets and critics, French, German and English, for eighty years.'" One might wish that Lemaitre had written "in spite of" in place of the second "by." For one Harris, Shakespeare

has had a thousand Paul Bourgets.

According to the advertisements that appeared at the time in the newspapers, Mr. Arthur Hopkins not long ago produced Shakespeare's "Macbeth." A view of the exhibit convinced one, however, that it was not Mr. Arthur Hopkins who produced Shakespeare's "Macbeth" so much as it was Shakespeare's "Macbeth" that produced Mr. Arthur Hopkins. It was difficult to discern any Shakespeare, save in the audience. The stage disclosed a minimum of Shakespeare and a maximum of Hopkins. In an announcement made preliminary to the production, Mr. Hopkins affirmed that it was his intention to present the play for its enduring values alone. "My intention," he stated in effect, "will be to release the immortal theme from the text, without regard for time or place or people." In a manner of speaking, Mr. Hopkins may be said to have succeeded brilliantly. He not only released from the text the immortal theme, but almost everything else that Shakespeare put into it.

I lay the blame on poor Mr. Hopkins, though the truth is that if ever a scene designer, composer of incidental music and leading actor betrayed a producer, the Messrs. Robert Edmond Jones, Robert R. Bennett and Lionel Barrymore did that very thing. Jones' scenery fought the Hopkins direction at every turn; Bennett impudently essayed to make the music of Shakespeare more musical by adding to it a couple of cornets and a bass viol; and Barrymore's Macbeth was merely the villain in an old Theodore Kremer melodrama, minus only the patent leather shoes, silk hat and black moustache. Hopkins' guilt as a theatrical producer rests chiefly in his having taken "Macbeth" out of the theater and put it back into the library. It is one of this producer's virtues that he can take a modern play that is in some measure purely "theater" and, by extracting from it that share of theatricality, give it the smooth feel of life. But when he visits this same technique upon a play like "Macbeth," one that

is entirely "theater," he ruins the play by introducing contact with life into it. It cannot profit an artificial flower, however beautiful, to plant it in the soil of earth. "Macbeth" is simply an old A. H. Woods thriller written by the greatest poet that ever lived. It should be played just as an old A. H. Woods thriller would be played, by the greatest actors that ever lived. To play it as if it were "A Successful Calamity" is to play "Shenandoah" like "The Yellow Jacket."

Mr. Jones, for all the unanimous admission that he went far astray in the present instance, has been credited in many quarters with having nonetheless exercised great imagination in his settings for the production, and has been complimented for his habitual "initiative" and "artistic courage." Though it is true that this Mr. Jones has done more for the beauty of American theatrical investiture than any other man, and though it is equally true that his work in "Richard III" marked the high level for this country, his much spoken of imagination in the case of "Macbeth" is actually less imagination than lack of imagination. In American criticism almost everything is called imaginative that substitutes mere novelty or freakishness for authentic fancy. There is, of course, a very high degree of imagination that finds itself allied with integrity to novelty and freakishness—as in the case of, say, Strindberg and his "Dream Play"—but Mr. Jones' imagination in the instance of "Macbeth" is imagination primarily in terms of hallucination. The reason is perhaps not far to seek.

Mr. Jones is a highly talented man in his own right, but he is gradually being goaded beyond his capabilities by his overzealous admirers. One of these admirers has written of his work in the production under consideration, "Certainly nothing approaching it in radical originality has been seen on any established stage in this country or Europe." If this sort of thing keeps up, poor Mr. Jones will be Ben-Ami'd be-

fore he is much older. He is a skilful designer—the best we have—but his is fundamentally not an original mind, and it is a pity to urge him to an originality that is not in him and that, in the mad groping for it, brings him to abandon the very considerable talent for imitative beauty that he possesses. His work in "Macbeth," so far as "radical originality" goes, is radically original only in so far as it combines the radicality of such familiar German scenic artists as Ludwig Sievert and W. Wirk with the originality of Gordon Craig, a combination of theories akin to a commixture of Gertrude Stein and Shelley. That this commingling of theories was deliberate on Mr. Jones' part is hardly to be doubted, since his studies in Germany surely made him privy to the devices of both Sievert and Wirk, and since his fundamental theory of investiture is, and always has been, of a piece with Craig's. Had he directly imitated either Sievert or Wirk on the one hand or Craig, their father, on the other, his "Macbeth" would have been a valuable effort. The strain for originality is what deleted the effort of all of its value. Mr. Hopkins had best bear Jones closely in mind in the matter of future productions. Beginning as of one mind, they are gradually pulling far apart from each other in theory. Jones will ruin Hopkins and Hopkins Jones, unless they soon get together and make common ground.

Mr. Hopkins, like many producers who have attempted to bring new interpretations to Shakespeare, similarly broke himself on the rocks of originality. In his effort to steer a middle course between the Craig theory on the one side and the Expressionismus theory on the other, he ran on the shoals of a nondescript island peopled entirely by Robert Mantells and Walter Hasenklevers. In his commendable attempt to break away from the American papier-mâché Shakespearean tradition—the Shakespeare of pulpit elocution, Swoboda gestures, canvas castles and Columbia sophomore Romans—he broke

away not only from the American Shakespeare but from the Stratford Shakespeare as well. For there is a deal of Shakespeare that demands just this banal treatment for its best theatrical effect. I am surely not ass enough to argue that there is only one way to play Shakespeare, but I can never quite rid myself of the conviction that a combination of what is best in the traditional way and of what is best in the new is not the most satisfactory way. This was the plan of Reinhardt, to whom the theater owes several of its finest Shakespearean productions. This is the way of Gordon Craig, for all his wish to deny it. Craig has simply rid tradition of its ugliness, preserved what was beautiful in it, and given that beauty a twofold life with the blood of a vivid and pulsing fancy. Strindberg's "Shakespeare is as formless as a rigid and pedantic formalist" may be made to apply to the productions of Shakespeare as well as to the plays themselves. There was more of the traditional Shakespeare in Mr. Hopkins' production of "Richard III," an admirable production if ever there was one, than Mr. Hopkins himself perhaps suspects.

Of Mr. Lionel Barrymore's Macbeth, the less said the better. The actor's conception of the rôle rested chiefly in the bowels whence, rumbling and growling, its gutturals forced their way outward via the laryngeal passage. Only an animal skin stood between this Macbeth and Mr. Phil Dwyer's lion in Shaw's "Androcles." The initial scene on the heath, the dagger scene, and the final "Before my body I throw my warlike shield" episode were played all in the one key: a violent stomach-ache on the G string. For all that Mr. Barrymore was concerned, the title of Shakespeare's play might have been "Jack Dalton." Miss Julia Arthur's Lady Macbeth was, despite its periodic watery quality, more successful. Here the Hopkins direction was more clearly observable, and the intelligence quicker. The conception of the rôle, if not always the execution, was sound.

II

LAST month, in the course of a consideration of dramatic criticism as it is currently practised in America, I observed that it was the native commercial Puritanism in criticism that held back American farce writing and serious dramatic writing no less. "The best farce of a Guitry or a Dieudonné," I continued, "were it produced in America today without childish excisions, would receive unfavourable notices from nine newspapers out of ten. And the best sex drama of a Porto-Riche or a Wedekind would suffer a similar fate."

The truth of what I thus set down has been verified much sooner than I could anticipate for, since the appearance of the article, Georges de Porto-Riche's searching and admirable drama, "Amoureuse," one of the finest things of its kind in the modern French theater, has been produced in New York with certain alterations in its externals but with none—or, at most, few—in its internal structure and philosophy. I quote, verbatim and in full, a typical review of this best play by one of the foremost French dramatists of the present era, the review being headed, "French Play at Bijou Ranks Among Rankest," and given the sub-head, "Features Sex Appeal, Full of Claptrap":

An adaptation to our stage of a French play of considerable reputation, resulting in an exhibition so rank that it probably will enjoy a profitable series of matinee performances in these days of "high art," sheer clap-trap and unbounded curiosity for sex details, reached the Bijou Theater yesterday afternoon.

An unusually silky and lacy audience received this overripe domestic shadow from the pen of G. de Porto-Riche. And only the exertion of effort restrained this audience from leaning forward and peering inside the stage bedrooms, where a certain amount of the play's content was centred.

A French woman finds that her forty-two-year-old husband has lost his desire to be with her constantly, even spurns her caresses and love-makings, and simply will not spend an entire night with her without growling about it the next day. As matters grow more desperate, she gives herself to her husband's friend for a time, which enrages the husband and, it is presumed, brings him back.

Poor Cyril Keightley, a sorry figure, stumbling through his part with scarcely an intact line of the real dialogue at his command, was the husband. Exquisitely gowned and pretty, Estelle Winwood worried herself into at least three dramatic frenzies over her husband's lack of attention. Georges Flateau was the second man, and Margaret Dale did an inconsequential part just to while away the moments.

This, the American estimate of a drama that has won the highest praise from the best European critical minds, and whose author is one of the deservedly illustrious men of French dramatic letters. It is thus that the commercial Puritanism of our newspapers operates. Observe the attempt to dismiss the play curtly as beneath notice, the derisory quotation marks around the phrase high art, the allusion to "unbounded curiosity for sex details" by way of dismissing what is generally conceded to be one of the most incisive studies of the havoc of passion that the contemporary stage knows, the impatient *Police Gazette* summary of the theme, and the final derogatory effort to commiserate the lot of the actors. And note above all the effort to palm off the appraisal as that of one privy to the play in its original language, and so not open to blame from correspondents who perchance might write in and point out that damaging changes had been wrought by the adaptor: "With scarcely an intact line of the real dialogue at his command."

As I have said, the play is presented locally in what amounts in the main to a faithful translation; only the locale and the names of the characters have been idiotically transferred to America. The exhibit is not equivocal; it gives a very fair idea of the original manuscript. And this original manuscript, for all its occasional odds with the expressed American attitude on its subject matter, is of universal applicability. For all the words that he now and again speaks, Dr. Etienne Fériaud is not alone a Frenchman, but a professional man of any country, and Germaine, his wife, a clearly recognizable, if perhaps not altogether common, type. Their drama

and their philosophies, despite their Gallic working out, are not local. "Amour-euse," hailed even by Sarcey as a play that must endure, is the progenitor of a thousand inferior triangle plays. It is brilliantly written; it is profoundly true; it is one of the classics of later day French dramatic literature. The sex it treats of is ugly, but the treatment is brave, bold and beautiful.

III

IN spite of my best efforts to persuade myself to join the many critics who find in the plays of Mr. A. A. Milne wit of a high order, I find that I must report myself still a skeptic. After seeing two of his plays, "Belinda" and "Mr. Pim Passes By," and reading four others, "Wurzel-Flummery," "The Lucky One," "The Boy Comes Home" and "The Red Feathers," I cannot resist the conclusion that he falls with the Harold Chapin of "The New Morality," the Stanley Houghton of "Fancy Free," "Phipps," etc., the Macdonald Hastings of "Love—And What Then?" and other such English playwrights into the catalogue of what may be termed perspirational humourists. Unless wit is of a genuinely high quality, it must have about it something of spontaneity, an unconscious air, to achieve its proper effect, and what there is of Milne's lacks this almost entirely. His humour possesses an assiduity that robs it of sauce.

One of the weaknesses of the lesser British playwrights of the day lies in the omnipresent dodge of attempting to brew laughter from the ancient device of bringing into sharp juxtaposition two subjects violently out of key with each other. This is a favourite practise of Milne's, and perhaps the leading element in his code of humour. An irrelative allusion to pigs interjected suddenly into a conversation on love, an alien reference to sausages inserted into an observation on cynicism, an extraneous mention of a bowler-hat during a discussion of poetry—these are the species of comic rabbits that Milne continually pulls out of his top hat. And

when he doesn't rely upon sudden contrast as a comic device, his reliance is largely upon such equally fragile devices as causing a comic character to repeat the remark of a serious character directly after him, mispronouncing a person's name, and confusing Eugene Aram with Enoch Arden. Into the midst of a pleasantly written scene Mr. Milne intrudes one or another of these stratagems, and devastates what goes before and what follows.

Like certain of his contemporaries among the English writers for the theater, Mr. Milne suffers further from his heavy effort to be insistently light. His lightness, like theirs, has about it not infrequently a sense of tug and strain. Where a playwright like Haddon Chambers or Hubert Henry Davies, appreciating his shortcomings in this direction, promptly abandons froth *qua* froth the moment he detects a bead of perspiration on its brow, Milne blandly wipes off the bead and ploughs determinedly ahead. In none of his plays has this been more clearly evident than in "Mr. Pim," lately staged in New York by the praiseworthy Theater Guild. Despite a first-rate performance of the leading rôle by Miss Laura Hope Crews, and generally adroit staging, the net impression one takes away from the exhibit is of having been present at a dinner party whereat all the exceptionally dull guests have endeavoured to be sedulously amusing. Mr. Milne is by no means an exceptionally dull fellow, but he gives one the feeling of trying to be too exceptionally bright. One suspects that if he were not so eager to be witty he might write much more diverting comedies.

IV

A PLAY like Gregorio Martinez Sierra's "Cradle Song," recently presented in a translation from the Spanish by Mr. John Garrett Underhill, is a bit disturbing to those of us writers on the theater who have devoted ourselves indefatigably to decrying the insistence in the drama upon what is known as

action. After many years of commentary in which such commonly spoken of "action" has been made the target of all sorts of ironic and facetious spon-toons and djerrids, and in which the complete elimination of such absurd action has been rather obstreperously prayed for, it comes as something of a shock to find one suddenly getting one's wish and being bored half to death as a result. If ever a play met the desires of the anti-action school, this play of Sierra's is it. Placid, reserved, languid, monotonous, along toward its middle it provokes in the erstwhile derider of action an unholy longing for what may be inelegantly described as the good old Willard Mack stuff.

The truth about Sierra's play is that it is less a play than a short piece of descriptive fiction incongruously set upon a theater stage and peremptorily bid to conduct itself like a drama. What results is an uncommonly adroit piece of atmospheric writing vocalized by a company of actors in appropriate costumes, but deficient in all the elements that go to constitute a theater play, save alone colour. There is no story, or at most, but a thin, faint thread of story, no characterization, no wit that might serve to take the place of story and character, no movement of even an artificial nature, no variety, and no suspense that may come from either the authentically good or proficiently bad art of the theater. The quality of the composition lies in its sympathetic reflection of life in a convent in Spain, and in the atmosphere evoked. One finds the picture gracious, doubtless faithful, and often possessed of an understanding tenderness. But for all Sierra's measure of skill in literary composition, this dramatic effort of his fails to sustain the theatrical interest. One may even be privileged to doubt the rumoured popular success of the play in Madrid. It is not for me to believe that the Anglo-Saxon and Latin popular theater tastes are so widely divergent.

Physically, the play has been very beautifully produced: the settings and stage pictures are unusually persuasive.

But one may be pardoned a small sneeze at the kind of producer who sees fit to cast the rôles of the Spanish characters with performers bearing such names as McCahill, O'Connor, Flinn, MacGregor and Kane, the most of whom are the proud possessors of a rich Irish brogue.

V

MISS RACHEL CROTHERS continues on the down grade with "Nice People," her latest flirtation with the box-office. In it, as in her other recent work for the theater, are few indications of the talent which she promised when first she appeared as a playwright. Her writing, as I have been pointing out from year to year, successively becomes poorer and poorer, and her point of view cheaper and tawdrier. In the writing of a new play she rests content to reboil the characters and ideas of a former play, her leading concern appearing to be merely the vulgarizing of the antecedent characters and ideas that the box-office may be the better satisfied. Thus, the present play is a vulgarization of the theme of her play, "Young Wisdom," and a sensationalization of the aberrant young girl episode in her play, "He and She." This compound, as in the instance of her play, "39 East," she serves up with a sauce of vaudeville jokes, and contentfully sits back to await the returns.

Propaganda and indignation have also invaded the bosom of Miss Crothers. The propaganda in "Nice People" takes the form of a vociferous inveighing against the cigarette-smoking, cocktail-drinking, promiscuous-kissing younger generation and of an ominous warning of the effect upon the next generation; and the indignation explodes in a ringing speech deploring the sacrifice of so many American soldiers in France that this kind of civilization (*business of sneering*) might be preserved. In brief, Robert W. Chambers. There is a measure of skill in Miss Crothers' drawing of the character of the sportive young society girl, but beyond this there is nothing.

Miss Francine Larrimore gives a carefully planned and well executed performance of the rôle of the girl. Heavily criticized for the peculiar hoarseness of her speaking voice, it will be well for her to rest assured that this peculiar hoarseness is one of her most valuable assets, and that for her to lose it would be a distinct loss to her individuality. The studiously acquired and artificial mellifluous speaking voice is one of the banes of the American stage. A young woman's natural, unaffected voice, for all its roughness, is—if her enunciation be clear—a charming thing. There are altogether too many second-hand Ethel Barrymore voices as it is. Mrs. Fiske has never sought to achieve a musical larynx, and yet they tell me that she has got on very well indeed.

VI

CONSIDERABLY above the average is Mr. Emery Pottle's "The Hero," an ironic study of character that emerges sharply from a more or less marshy and stenciled fable. In its general outline closely resembling the play "Steve," by John T. McIntyre, with which Arthur Hopkins inaugurated his career as a producing manager, this derisory yet sympathetic picture of a man given at once to splendid physical bravery and yellow morals has in it much of the merit that is born when observation and understanding are shaken through an imaginative sieve. Nor is this the single vivid character that Mr. Pottle has contrived. His puny humdrum insurance agent, posturing before his wife as a fellow of affairs and forever cracking sorry jokes in a pathetic effort at expansive good nature, is a picture not less shrewdly drawn. There is courage in the composition of this brace of characters, the sort of courage that one encounters all too uncommonly in the American writing for the theater; there is no attempt at cheap compromise, no seeking after convenient sentiment to soften the portraits.

It is unfortunate that, after so promising a beginning, Mr. Pottle should have arbitrarily inserted these two excellently maneuvered characters into so trite and theatrical a story. Like many others before him, the playwright has made the mistake of trying to make his story tell the characters instead of making his characters tell the story. But, for all the demerits of plot, there are flashes of insight into nature and deductions from experience that reveal the author as a man of no little dramatic talent.

But the real treat of the season was Prof. George H. Atkinson's *magnum opus* entitled "Survival of the Fittest," briefly revealed down in Greenwich Village and characteristically permitted to pass unnoticed by a dunderheaded public. That a public which is presumed to regard laughter as the sole end of theatrical entertainment should have neglected to sense the virtues of this hilarious thesis drama can be accounted for only on the ground that in the past it has been sent by similar jeering newspaper reviews to other such anticipated picnics, only to find to its surprise and consternation that the plays were good ones. It is a pity, for the public has thus lost what was unquestionably the finest example of Brioux drama à la Charlie Chaplin that the American stage has seen.

The thesis of Prof. Atkinson's gem rested in the pronunciamiento that all the great things in the world are inevitably done by tall, powerfully built men. Even had the Professor been ten times as able a playwright, one would have experienced some difficulty in getting his thesis down when one looked at the stage, observed the number of tall, powerfully built men in the various parts, and perversely recalled that, at forty and forty-five years of age, the greatest thing they had accomplished in the world was to get jobs as actors—and ham actors at that—in so ignoble and pitiable a show.

The Land of the Free

By *H. L. Mencken*

I

THE most dreadful reading that has come to these eyes for many a moon is to be found in "Freedom of Speech," by Zechariah Chafee, Jr., professor of law in Harvard University (*Harcourt*). The book is appalling, it is revolting, it is almost too much to be borne, and yet I commend it unqualifiedly to all Americans, and in particular to all who esteem the common virtues of fairness and decency, and wish their country to show them. The tale it has to tell is, in brief, the tale of the complete abandonment of these virtues during the recent war, first by the late Dr. Wilson and his janissaries, then by Congress, and finally by the courts of justice, the last hope of honest men. For nearly two years they were almost unheard of, and their adjournment was scarcely protested. For nearly two years the framing and administration of the law in the United States was in the hands chiefly of scoundrels, and the protection of the common rights of the citizen was entrusted to idiots and poltroons. In those two years all the laborious work of a century and a half—toward the free and honest administration of fair laws, the dealing of plain justice between man and man, the protection of the weak and helpless, the safeguarding of free assemblage and free speech—was ruthlessly undone. Among the thousands of men in high and powerful office during that time by appointment of Dr. Wilson—men who had sworn to uphold the Constitution of the United States, and to guard as sacred all the guarantees in the Bill of Rights—there was not a single one, so

far as I have been able to discover, who made the slightest protest against the sadistic fury of persecution that went on all about him, and that he was a part of. Among the six hundred men in the two Houses of Congress there were not a dozen who tried to halt the saturnalia, and all of these were instantly assaulted by the Administration and its agents. And among all the judges on the state and federal benches of the Republic, there were not six who stood out clearly and irreconcilably for orderly processes of law, a decent regard for the common rights of men accused, and the rigid enforcement of all their constitutional guarantees—and but two of these were members of the Supreme Court of the United States.

Dr. Chafee, in his depressing but invaluable book, covers only one small phase of the history of that time. He deals with violations of the First Amendment to the Constitution—the amendment which forbids Congress to make any law "abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances." His volume is at once a diligent and sober collection of the salient facts, and a judicial presentation of their bearing and significance. It is the work of a sound lawyer, and, what is more, of a lawyer who knows how to write. The thing is meticulously documented; every statement in it is supported by names and dates; no one will ever be able to controvert even the least of its facts. But it tells not a tenth of the whole story; it scarcely brushes the edges of the subject. The complete record of the tyrannies that

went on during the war—by the Post-office, by the gunmen and *agents provocateurs* of the ironically-named Department of Justice, by the hordes of private cads who helped them in their rogueries, by blackmailers disguised as advocates of the Liberty Loans, by profiteers disguised as patriots, by political scoundrels aspiring to higher office, by weak, pusillanimous and dishonest judges, by hysterical juries and unconscionable newspapers—this record would fill a hundred volumes as large as Chafee's, and still leave most of the story to be told. In no other country engaged in the late war, on either side, was there anything even remotely approaching the complete abandonment of sense and justice that went on in the United States. And in none other is there so nauseous an aftermath. Let a man belong to a minority that is unpopular enough, and he is quite without civil rights in the Republic. He can be deprived of his right to representation, and there is no remedy for him. He can be forbidden the use of the mails, and there is no way for him to escape the burden. He can be robbed of his rights to free speech, to free assemblage and to inviolable domicile, and he must bear it. He can be put on trial for his liberty or even his life, prosecuted with perjury, belabored by newspaper clamor, and calmly lynched in open court, and the higher courts will give him no redress.

Dr. Chafee is a lawyer and hence disposed to be polite to judges. As a result, he is not too eager to lodge the blame where it belongs. As for me, I am convinced that most of it should be heaped upon the judges of the federal courts. It was within their power to halt the disgraceful business long before it got to its height, but only a few of them—Chafee names them, and dedicates his book to one of them—showed any disposition to do so. The situation that confronted them was by no means new in history, and the remedy was by no means beyond their power. The Civil War saw the same hysterical hunt for mythical traitors—many of them, at

that time, far from mythical—and the same effort by the executive power to put them down without regard to the guarantees of the Constitution. There was, of course, no Wilson in those days—vain, narrow, despotic, unmagnanimous, fanatical, hateful, cheap. But there were Palmers, and there were Burlesons, and under them they had hordes of cowards who were quite as willing as Palmer's men to escape the trenches by manufacturing alarms at home. An impediment, however, showed itself. That impediment was in the federal courts. Instantly the rights of the citizen were invaded the courts went to his aid—and until the end of the war they remained resolutely on his side, protecting him faithfully against every oppression, however pure its motive or high its source, and insisting irrevocably that he get a fair and open trial, and that he have every chance to defend himself, and that justice be the same for him if he were poor and friendless as if he were rich and powerful. And over all stood the Supreme Court of the United States, above the turmoil, exact and passionless, never moving an inch.

That was half a century ago. In the late war the courts simply joined the mob and helped to pull the rope. Chafee gives some of the astounding facts. Judges made patriotic stump speeches from the bench, rousing juries to fury against men accused of crime. Extraordinarily violent ones were moved from court to court, that culprits of unusual unpopularity might get the full effect of their venom. Laws were distorted to fit cases never contemplated by their makers. Crimes were invented impromptu, to fetch prisoners under newspaper assault. Sentences of appalling ferocity were inflicted upon unfortunates guilty, at most, of minor misdemeanors. The whole administration of justice was turned into a farce and a stench. . . . I have heard defenses of the learned judges; a few have even been moved to defend themselves. All of these defenses ground themselves upon the doctrine that a judge must

administer the law as he finds it—that the courts are theaters of law, not of justice. The hollowness of this plea is abundantly demonstrated by Chafee's evidence. The worst atrocities of the time were quite outside the pale of recognizable law; the Espionage Act, to take one example, was read full of prohibitions that are not so much as hinted at in its actual text. But even aside from this, the defense is without merit. American judges are not bound to execute laws that contravene the most elementary rights of the citizen. On the contrary, they are bound to prevent their execution; they constitute a barrier set up against legislative excess and imbecility; it is their first and foremost duty to protect the citizen against oppression. That concept of their duty is firmly fixed in the minds of every intelligent American. He looks to the courts to safeguard him from official crime, law or no law. He demands that they do it. And when the day of reckoning comes he will want to know why they have failed.

II

ON the first page of "American Writers of the Present Day, 1890 to 1920," by the learned Dr. T. E. Rankin, professor of rhetoric in the University of Michigan (*Wahr*), I find the following sentence:

Precisely the same situation *pertains* now.

Somehow this use of the word interests me. Obviously, a professor of rhetoric in a great university should be an authority on such matters—but just how can a situation *pertain*? I go to the Standard Dictionary for light, and find that the synonyms of *pertain* are *appertain*, *concern*, *belong*, *regard*, *relate*. I substitute them and obtain:

Precisely the same situation *appertains* now.
Precisely the same situation *concerns* now.
Precisely the same situation *belongs* now.
Precisely the same situation *regards* now.
Precisely the same situation *relates* now.

I turn to page 52 of the same great work, and find the following:

On the basis of such a distinction as that

of length or brevity, one might as well speak of the two or three act play as a dramalette or dramolet, which no one appears *anxious* to do.

Anxious? Does the professor mean *eager*? . . . Again, on page 56, what does he mean by the word *pseudo-hallucination*? Pseudo is from the Greek word, *pseudes*, meaning false. Well, how can an hallucination be true? Is it not, by its very nature, a falsity? If so, then we have here a double falsity, a false falsehood. . . . I proceed to page 60. I find: "One is 'playing safe' when *he* . . ." On page 109 it occurs again: "If *one* will turn to page 239, . . . *he* will find . . ." And on page 126: "One cannot refrain from quoting when *he* thinks . . ." And so on.

Obviously, the science of rhetoric is developing rapidly at the University of Michigan. Here is a professor who has already thrown overboard the dictionaries and is fast preparing himself to do the same with the grammar-books. Ring Lardner himself is scarcely more disdainful of Harvey and Webster. . . . But that is as far as his rebellious spirit goes. When it comes to moral and æsthetic matters, as opposed to purely lexicographical and grammatical matters, he shows all of the conservatism that befits an awakener of the souls and intellects of youth. His book, indeed, is an almost perfect model of professorial critical theory. It praises Coningsby Dawson's "Carry On" as the work of "a master of literary style," it puts Cale Young Rice "high among those who belong to the really tuneful throng," it hails F. Marion Crawford as "beyond a doubt a man of genius"—and it groups James Huneker with Christopher Morley and Robert Cortes Holliday, dismisses Dreiser on the ground that he is "uncreative," calls Hamlin Garland's "A Son of the Middle Border" a novel, and elaborately avoids any mention whatsoever of James Branch Cabell and Willa Cather! I find myself, indeed, so fascinated by this work that I am unable to put it down; I have already read it three times. Almost every page introduces

me to literati of whose existence I have been hitherto unaware: Mrs. Sherwood Bonner MacDowell, Mrs. Louise Clarke Prynelle, Miss Martha Young, Mrs. Annie C. Allinson, Miss Sara Jeannette Duncan, Eric Mackay Yoeman, Hugh J. Maclean, Dr. J. B. Dollard, Prof. J. D. Logan, Arthur S. Bourinot, and so on. And everywhere I find judgments that offer me light and leading. Of all the "young men of America who are now writing novels, Ernest Poole perhaps gives the greatest promise." Edward Lucas White, it appears, is a man of such talent that "we should have more abiding books" if more of our writers imitated him. Huneker was a laborious fellow, but his style was "jerky, unpleasantly so," and his "diction often not so much erudite as so far-fetched as to be strained to misapplication." William Allen White's "A Certain Rich Man" is a "great novel": "few books are more persuasive—partly because the author devoted three years to the writing of it." Charles D. Stewart's "Partners of Providence" is "such a book as the world has waited for ever since Mark Twain's stories of river life came to the end of their writing." Edwin Markham and Cale Young Rice are first-rate poets, but Carl Sandburg and Amy Lowell are frauds. Richard Hovey spoiled his verse by imitation of "the vagrom spirit of Walt Whitman" . . . But best of all are the professor's reticences. Mark Twain, it appears, wrote "Tom Sawyer Abroad" after 1890, but not "The Mysterious Stranger" or "What is Man?" David Graham Phillips was full of "moral earnestness"—but he did not write "Susan Lenox." As for such writers as Montague Glass, Charles G. Norris, Henry B. Fuller, Joseph Medill Patterson, George Ade, Abraham Cahan, E. W. Howe, Vincent O'Sullivan, Frank Harris, Sinclair Lewis and Zona Gale, they simply do not exist. Sherwood Anderson is condemned to Coventry along with Cabell and Miss Cather. Ezra Pound, John McClure and Eunice Tietjens are unheard of among the poets. The salient

American critics of life are Paul Elmer More and Agnes Repplier. There is no mention whatever of any critic of music or painting or the drama (save only the "unpleasant" Huneker), or of any of the young Liberals, or of any such fellow as Upton Sinclair, Norman Hapgood, Brooks Adams, Ralph Adams Cram, or Brand Whitlock. Among the dramatists there is praise for Charles Rann Kennedy, Charles Kenyon, Marguerite Merington and Percy Mackaye, but not a word either for or against Zoë Akins and Eugene O'Neill.

A curious work, indeed. A perfect specimen of the depths of banality to which the teaching of "English" and "literature" has descended in some of our public seminaries. I do not offer it as the worst that I know of, but as something fairly typical; I have on my desk a book from the University of Nebraska that is ten times as nonsensical. Nor do I expose it to the gaze of the nobility and gentry simply to poke fun at a poor professor—one who, according to "Who's Who in America," has pursued the humanities for twenty-four years, and holds two learned degrees, and is a favorite lecturer, and contributes to such gazettes as *Poet-Lore* and the *Homiletic Review*, and has taught rhetoric at the University of Michigan since 1905, and is, moreover, an unyielding patriot and a sound Christian. What interests me is the effect upon the poor yokels who strive heroically for a "liberal" education at such universities as Michigan, and are then belabored and stupefied with such balderdash. Can you imagine the thirst for enlightenment that must be in some of those candidates for the arts degree, and the vast sacrifices that must stand behind their candidacy—remote farmers sweating like slaves for year after year that their sons and daughters may be "educated," farmwives wearing out their lives in miserable drudgery and loneliness, pennies saved one by one, thousands of little deprivations, hopes cherished through whole generations? And then the result—a bath of bosh. If a professor writes a text-book, I assume

that it is for his students: who else would want to read it? Well, imagine a young man or woman outfitted with such a notion of the literature of the country as one finds in the tome of Prof. Rankin! Think of raising chickens and milking cows for twenty years to pay for such an education! I am surely not one to laugh at the spectacle. To me it seems to be tragic.

III

FOR reasons peculiarly personal, I find it impossible to praise the new Cabell *opus*, "Figures of Earth" (*McBride*), in high, astounding terms, but I may as well confess at once that this impediment gives me very little real difficulty, for the book seems to me to lie a good way below "Jurgen," both in conception and in execution. To begin with, the quest of Manuel the swineherd is intrinsically less gaudy and glamorous than the quest of Jurgen the pawnbroker; the things he searches for in the world are less alluring than the things that Jurgen seeks, and he looks for them in narrower fields and among less amusing folk. It follows inevitably that his adventures are less various and exhilarating. Who, among all the twice and thrice-born men that he encounters is to be mentioned in the same breath with Gogyrvan Gawr, King of Glathion and father to the delectable Guenevere? And where, among all his colloquys with the beings of both worlds, is there a debate so gorgeous as that which Jurgen has with Gogyrvan in the thirteenth chapter of his saga? Alas, you may open any chapter of "Jurgen" at random, and find things not to be matched in "Figures of Earth"—the ceremonial of the breaking of the veil, the episode with the hamadryad, the scenes in the palace of Queen Anaïtis, the journey with the ghost of Queen Sylvia Tereu, the visit to Hell, the last palaver with Dame Lisa. The whole story of Manuel is on a smaller scale; there is more of the fairy tale in it and less of Rabelais; its humor seems to me to be more obvious and less penetrating. Is the influence of Comstockery to blame

for the difference? Perhaps in part. In more than one place the effort to bring a medieval tale within the limits laid down by the blue-noses is evident enough; often, indeed, the author pokes fun at the idiotic Presbyterian barriers that hedge him in. But that is only part of the story. The primary fact is that "Figures of Earth" is planned upon a smaller scale than "Jurgen," and that it lacks the epical sweep and swagger of that masterpiece. Cabell is still enormously fantastic and whimsical; his satire is often as sharp as a needle; he has all his old skill at putting words together in mellifluous sequences. But there are no high points, no ascents to the grand manner, no passages for the full orchestra. From end to end of the book I find nothing comparable to that memorable buffoonery in "Jurgen" beginning: "The religion of Hell is patriotism, and the government is an enlightened democracy."

So much for the prosecution. What remains is a very excellent piece of writing—a book that would stand out brilliantly if the vast shadow of "Jurgen" were not upon it. I know of no man writing English today who handles the language with quite the same feeling for its smallest rhythms that Cabell shows; not even George Moore is his peer in that department. It is, in fact, a charming experience to read him for the sheer music that is in him, regardless of what he is driving at. His sentences follow one another like shadows, slyly, fleetly and beautifully. The raucous word, the clumsy phrase—these things seem to be quite beyond him; it is a literal fact that he is absolutely never guilty of them. His method, in other hands, might easily degenerate to sweetness; in truth, it always does when some lesser man attempts it. But he rolls along from end to end of a longish book without faltering once—without once falling into ineptitude or banality. For anyone to write such English is as rare as for anyone to write music like Mozart or Haydn; for an American to do it is little short of a miracle. We produce few stylists of any sort. All eyes,

in a moral republic, are upon content; if the doctrine of the scrivener is pure his manner is taken for granted. But here is an author who has so perfected manner that it makes content seem secondary, and even negligible; Cabell on the Constitution, or the eight-hour day, or the initiative and referendum would be charming, just as the average American, even on the Kamasutram, would be dull. I have told you that "Figures of Earth" is not up to his high mark, but I defy you to begin it without sliding through it to the end, easily and delightedly.

IV

My distaste for novels, bred of long-continued overdoses, continues, and I find it impossible to read more than a few of them. If, as the Hon. Mr. Harding so beautifully says, Service is "the supreme commitment of life," then I suppose I ought to retire to my chamber and fight my way through the two long volumes of "The Growth of the Soil," by Knut Hamsun (*Knopf*), but at the moment I am simply not up to it. Knut must either be less garrulous, or wait until I raise more steam. There are other novels that give me a certain uneasiness, but yet fail to bring me to an actual reading of them, among them, "The House in Dormer Forest," by Mary Webb (*Doran*); "Debatable Ground," by G. B. Stern (*Knopf*); "The House By the River," by A. P. Herbert, author of "The Secret Battle" (*Knopf*); "The Passionate Spectator," by Jane Burr, who is said to be the most beautiful lady novelist in the Republic (*Seltzer*); "The Sheik," by E. M. Hull, recommended as gaudy stuff by many tipsters (*Small-Maynard*); "Howard's End," by E. M. Forster (*Knopf*); "Blind Wisdom," by Amanda Hall (*Jacobs*), and "Margot's Progress," by Douglas Goldring (*Seltzer*). I also look with some interest toward two books of short stories: "Hungry Hearts," by Anzia Yezierska (*Houghton*), and "Original Sinners," by H. W. Nevins (*Huebsch*). Finally, there are some reprints of old books by novel-

ists recently come to fame: "The Job" and "The Trail of the Hawk," by Sinclair Lewis, author of "Main Street" (*Harper*), and "The Magician," by W. Somerset Maugham, author of "The Moon and Sixpence" (*Doran*).

Perhaps the general distaste for novels that I mention is partly to blame for my reaction to "The Lost Girl," by D. H. Lawrence (*Seltzer*)—partly, but surely not wholly! If the story is not a cheap and trivial piece of work, then write me down an ass forevermore. Nevertheless, if you disagree you will be in very eminent company. For some unfathomable reason, Lawrence is now being touted enormously in England by the same assiduous brothers who lately clouted the tom-tom for Frank Swinnerton, and I daresay that they will find it just as easy as it was the first time to influence American reviewers, most of whom are almost as subservient to English opinion as Woodrow himself. Upon the exact composition and aims of this benign camorra I hope to discourse at length on some future day; my spies in London are even now gathering the facts. Suffice it to say that it exists, that it engages in log-rolling as a steady occupation and upon a large scale, and that the beneficiaries of its efforts are often fourth-raters. Worse, it also undertakes to cry down men of genuinely superior quality; W. L. George is an example. If the business were confined to England it would be none of our concern, for we have plenty of log-rolling posses of our own, one of the worst of which, perhaps, consists of Dr. Brander Matthews, J. Rankin Towse, George Jean Nathan, Rupert Hughes, William Lyon Phelps and Max Eastman. But these English manufacturers of *réclame* have an export department that floods the United States with their tosh, and it is accepted quite gravely by the sophomores of the newspapers, and so a due regard for the national dignity demands that their hellish plots be exposed. To this patriotic duty I shall address myself, with God's permission, before many more moons have waxed and waned.

Meanwhile, I call attention to "The Lost Girl" as an instructive example of a novel that pretends to a great profundity but actually offers nothing save the shop-worn materials of fourth-rate romance. When Lawrence starts off it is with a clear promise to investigate the psyche of a typical English old maid—to set before us a serious study of the effects of the shortage of men upon the middle-class British virginity. But before he has got a third of the way he has converted his poor spinster into a sort of female Huck Finn, and toward the end he loses his grip upon her altogether, and she is carrying on in a manner so fantastic that it becomes wholly incredible. I do not fall into the fatuity, of course, of arguing that she ought to be the same gal all the way through. Far from it, indeed. I am, in truth, and have been for years, privy to the fact that it is the business of a novelist to depict the development, *i.e.*, the change, of character. But that development, I submit, must proceed within the bounds of the probable, and not show a complete abandonment of fundamental traits. If one wrote a novel showing a Princeton professor taking to Socialism it would violate no reasonable probability; to inhabit an American university town, in truth, must be to face constant incitements to Socialism, Bolshevism and even anarchy. But to show a professor throwing up his chair, shipping from Philadelphia on a cattle boat bound for Glasgow, and there opening a kosher delicatessen store—this would certainly cause even the most credulous to cough behind his hand. Well, something almost as absurd is set before us by M. Lawrence in "The Lost Girl." First he is careful to limn an English virgin of the most orthodox type—the daughter of a linen-draper in a small town, a mirror of all the Victorian virtues, an almost perfect specimen of the perfect lady of the third class. And then he proceeds to carry her through adventures that would almost give pause to a chorus-girl in an outlaw burlesque troupe. In brief, he forgets her altogether. When she leaves home to train

as a nurse in a maternity hospital, it still seems possible, if not downright probable. When, overcome by a sudden sense of romance, she permits herself to be betrayed by a travelling Italian mountebank, it begins to be fantastic but is still within the bounds of reason. But when he sets her to travelling all over England with the mountebank and his friends, and then, despite three good chances to marry normal Englishmen, has her elope to a small and miserable Italian village with her wop—when all this is dished up, the story takes on an air of the fabulous, and one groans over the incompetence that a realist can show when he tries to imitate W. J. Locke.

Locke himself, of course, might have told such a story plausibly, or, at all events, amusingly. But Locke always makes it plain from the start that his people are marionettes—that the thing is simply an idle tale, and not to be taken seriously. Lawrence, on the contrary, starts off quite solemnly and even indignantly; his first two or three chapters are in the manner of H. G. Wells and the Arnold Bennett of the Five Towns books. It is as if a novelist should begin like Dreiser in "The Titan" and end like Cabell in "Jurgens." Nor is there any charm in detail (at least to my taste) to conceal and justify the fundamental improbability. The lesser characters, save perhaps the old woman who bosses the mountebanks, are all quite unreal. The mountebanks themselves come straight from the pages of Locke. The ancient linen-draping father of the old maid is a ghost out of Dickens. Two of her three English suitors are so vague that one never really sees them. Even her conquering Italian is far more an actor in a romantic farce than a man. In brief, I can find nothing in the book save a pontifical silliness. To set such a work beside Bennett's "The Pretty Lady," or Wells' "Mr. Polly," or George's "Blind Alley," or Walpole's "The Gods and Mr. Perrin" is to achieve a critical imbecility. It is, forgetting a few sound passages, unmistakably third-rate stuff.



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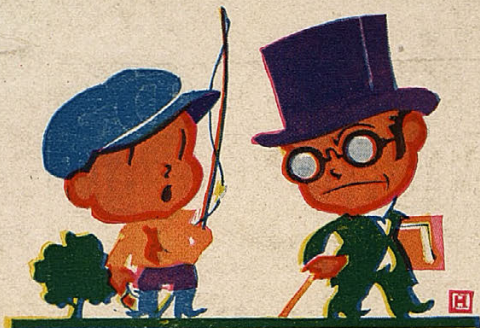
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He was a good Judge- after all

WHEN I was a kid.
* * *
I USED to believe.
* * *
THE JUDGE next door.
* * *
WOULD PUT me in jail.
* * *
FOR PLAYING hookey.
* * *
OR SWIPING apples.
* * *
AND I really behaved.
* * *
WHEN HE was around.
* * *
AND EVEN today.
* * *
I'M A little scared.
* * *
OF THE stern old boy.
* * *
SO IN his office.
* * *
THE OTHER day.
* * *
I HAD to wait.
* * *
AND WANTED to smoke.
* * *
AND I was afraid.
* * *
THE JUDGE would get sore.
* * *
BUT I took the chance.
* * *
AND LIT a cigarette.
* * *
AND THE judge came in.
* * *
AND LOOKED at me.
* * *
AS THOUGH I'd been caught.
* * *

BURGLING HIS safe.
* * *
AND HE came up.
* * *
WITH A solemn frown.
* * *
AND SAID, "Young man.
* * *
NO SMOKING here.
* * *
UNLESS THE old boy.
* * *
IS SMOKING too."
* * *
AND DARNED if he didn't.
* * *
SMILE AND say.
* * *
"GIVE ME one of those
* * *
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* * *



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